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NESTORIAN MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE

A CHURCH ON FIRE

NESTORIAN MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE

THE STORY OF A CHURCH ON FIRE

BY

THE REV. JOHN STEWART, M.A., PH.D.

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WITH FOREWORD BY

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Cairo, Egypt

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THE IMPERISHABLE MEMORY

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OF THE CHURCH OF THE EAST

WHO

LIVED AND DIED

IN THE

LIGHT OF ETERNITY

FOREWORD

A SCHOLARLY work such as this, prepared on historical lines after careful investigation, and thoroughly documented by references to many standard works, scarcely needs a foreword to commend it to the reading public. It fills a distinct gap on the shelf of missionary history and covers a large geographical area, once the fertile field of Nestorian missionaries and of a Church on fire for missions, but, later swept by the sirocco of triumphant Islam.

It is a pleasure to commend a book which we are confident will find a multitude of readers and not disappoint any.

The student of church history will, after perusing this book, be able to judge more fairly and with more sympathy a group of Christians which, wrongly considered schismatic, has suffered the label and libel of heresy. The strength of the Nestorian Church was its love and loyalty to Christ, its emphasis on His great commission and the heroism of its adventure into regions beyond the near East. Its weakness at a later period in history was due to compromise in the face of persecution. Dr. Stewart points out the various factors in Nestorian decadence, absorption by other faiths and final extermination, in regions once Christian. It is a story as fascinating as it is tragic and it holds a lesson for the

National churches now arising in the far East and in Southern Asia.

The chapters on Nestorianism in early Arabia and on the expansion of Christianity in central and eastern Asia are very timely, and present new material to the student of Islam and its spread.

Professor Tor Andrae, of the University of Upsala, has shown in his recent study on the Christian origins of Islam *Der Ursprung des Islams und des Christentums* (Upsala A.D. 1926) that the opinion hitherto current of sundry heretical sects to which Muhammad was indebted for his Christian ideas is a mistaken one. He directs attention to the great Church of Asia, the Nestorian, as the prime source of Christian thought and life in pre-Islamic Arabia. There are many points of similarity between Moslem teaching and Nestorian Christianity, but the one circle of ideas most prominent and characteristic according to Andrae is the eschatology with its extraordinary stress on the Day of Judgment.

Many were inclined to look elsewhere than in Christianity for the source of this element in Islamic teaching. Professor Tor Andrae points out that these very ideas were not only current but prominent in Syrian Christianity. Muhammad of course was not a Nestorian Christian, but if the conclusions reached by Professor Tor Andrae, and the historical survey given in this volume, are generally accepted, it means that we must not look for Muhammad's inspirational ideas in some hidden corner, but in the midst of the daily religious thought and practice of the great Nestorian church.

Islam did not arise in a backwater from some obscure Judaic Christian sect, but arose in the full stream of the religious life of western Asia. The rapid incursions of Islam into Persia, Syria and central Asia must no longer be looked upon as the impact of an entirely new set of ideas. The way for its triumph had been prepared from the first through the expansion and then alas! through the failure and decadence of Nestorian Christianity. The causes of this expansion and decay are brilliantly set forth in the volume before us. Weakened by persecution, lured from its true goal by compromise, and exterminated in the end by ruthless savagery, a church once on fire for missions ceased to be an aggressive force, and left behind only the imperishable memory of its past greatness. From the dead ashes we know how once the flames rose to heaven.

MADRAS,
January 1928.

SAMUEL M. ZWEMER.

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CHRONOLOGY

A.D.	
50–226.	Church of the East administered by Addai or Thaddeus, Mari, Agai and their successors.
49–52.	St. Thomas arrived in India.
64.	Reputed arrival of first missionaries in China.
120–140.	Gospel carried to the Gilanians and the lands of Gog and Magog.
185.	India visited by Pantaenus.
280.	Papa first Catholicos of Seleucia-Ctesiphon.
300.	Probable date of Asoka inscriptions and edicts.
303.	Arnobius speaks of the Chinese as united in the faith of Christ.
339–379.	First Persian persecution—Sapor II.
345.	Arrival of Knai Thomas on Malabar Coast.
356.	Theophilus the Indian, from the island of Divu, consecrated bishop.
420.	Second Persian persecution—Bahram V.
424.	Title of patriarch first conferred on Catholicos of Seleucia.
448.	Third Persian persecution—Yezdegerd II.

A.D.

448. The massacre at Kirkuk.
523. Visit of Cosmas.
600. Horoscope of Krishna, August 7th of that year.
618–845. The China of the T'ang era influenced by Christianity.
628–643. Metropolitans appointed to Samarkand, India and China.
724–748. Visit of Christian physician to Japan and reported conversion of the empress.
780. Christianity the dominant religion of China.
781. Erection of Nestorian monument in China.
822. Copper plate charters of Christians of St. Thomas.
845. Edict of suppression of Christians in China.
1001. First Muhammadan invasion of India.
1007. Conversion of the Keraits.
1143. Legend of Prester John.
1206. Rise to power of Jenghiz Khan.
1222. Patna, India, a metropolitan see.
1249–1345. Date of Semiryechensk cemetery inscriptions.
1259. Kublai Khan first emperor of a United China.
1344. Rise of empire of Vijayanagar.

A.D.

1369. Extirpation of Christianity in China under Ming dynasty.
1366–1405. Period of Tamerlane's domination.
1398. Sack of Delhi by Tamerlane.
1442. The Vizier of empire of Vijayanagar a Christian.
1500. Portuguese arrived in India.
1503. Appointment of metropolitan to Java.
1506. A thousand Christians in service of king of Pegu in Burma.
1542. Arrival of St. Francis Xavier in India.
1599. Synod of Diamper in Malabar.
1625. Discovery of Nestorian monument in China.
1653. Coonen Cross secession.
1714. Numbers of Christians in armies of the Mahrattas.
1784. Forcible conversions to Islam by Tippu Sultan.
1809. Massacre of Christians in Travancore and Cochin.
1837. Breach between C.M.S. Missionaries and Jacobite metropolitan.
1896. Mar Thoma Syrian Christian annual convention at Maramann begun.

INTRODUCTION

PARTHIANS, Medes and Elamites and the dwellers in Mesopotamia were among those mentioned as having been present on the great day of Pentecost, the birthday of the Christian church. Most of them, probably, were either Jews or Jewish proselytes, and had been born and brought up in an atmosphere of expectation. 'In every city proselytes from heathenism were joined to the synagogues' and helped to swell the number of Annas and Simeons who were waiting 'for the consolation of Israel.' Points continually emphasized in the synagogues were, the coming of Him who had been so long foretold, and that the time of His coming was at hand. 'The prophets' says the Talmud 'prophesied only of Messiah,' and again, 'for Messiah only was the world created.' Brought up in such an atmosphere we can well understand the appeal that even an occasional visit to the Holy City made, and the thrill that went through the visitors on this occasion when they realized that the long-looked-for event had at last taken place and that the Messiah had actually appeared.

They were devout men, these Jews who were gathered together in Jerusalem 'from every nation under heaven' on that eventful day. Numbers of them had been present at the Passover celebration

six weeks earlier and had witnessed the cruel mocking, scourging and crucifixion of Christ. Many of them had seen the Lord after His resurrection. One hundred and twenty had gone through the indescribable experience of hearing the sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, seeing the tongues like as of fire, and being filled with the Holy Ghost—and, listening to the significance of this extraordinary phenomenon as expounded by Peter, himself one of the number, three thousand more entered into the same experience—an experience that revolutionized their whole life.

Then, anxious to be gone that they might carry their great news to their companions, friends and neighbours in Parthia, Media, Elam and adjoining countries, those of them who came from thence speedily set out on their journey homeward. Throughout the whole of that vast area they went, literally everywhere, ablaze with God the Holy Ghost and inspired by the tremendous fact of a crucified and risen Messiah with all that that involved. 'We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard' they said. Constraint was upon them. They were 'A Church on Fire'. No wonder that others were set on fire by contact with them. The message itself 'centered wholly in the person of Christ; who He was, the tremendous thing He did in dying, the terrific necessity for it and the ceaseless appeal to men to choose.' To the messengers the central fact of Christ's life was His substitutionary death. 'The terrible tragedy of sin' was the one thing that made

that death a vital necessity. The sin score was settled on Calvary and only so. There was no other way, and the importance of a definite and immediate decision was accordingly constantly emphasized.

That the message must have been carried to the furthest confines of the Asiatic continent with almost the rapidity of a prairie fire is evident from the fact that St. Thomas is said to have arrived in India not later than A.D. 49, and tradition speaks of messengers from the west as having reached China in A.D. 61 or even earlier.

'Their sound went into all the earth and their words unto the ends of the world' is how Paul describes it in his epistle to the Romans, and this was not mere hyperbole, but solid fact.

The effect of such an intensive proclamation of the gospel message can perhaps best be understood by a reference to the operation of the Spirit of God in a movement, unfortunately only too rare, which has taken place in West Africa in our own time.

The story is reproduced in the American *Sunday School Times* of October 1st 1927 under the title 'A John the Baptist of the Ivory Coast.' The hero of the story is a negro preacher by the name of William Wade Harris, unattached to any mission. A man of very limited educational ability, he was converted at the age of twenty-one but apparently not until some years later did he enter into the experience which revolutionized his whole life. He says 'I felt the Holy Ghost come upon me,' and at once he began to preach. An English trader, with no

love for missions, said he was in Fresco in 1912 and saw Harris coming along there. In three days the town was changed from a state of debased fetischism into one of at least nominal Christianity. His chief equipment was a thorough knowledge of the Bible. He preached with tremendous earnestness and deep conviction, proclaiming the holiness, jealousy and love of God. From village to village he passed staying only a few days or at most a month or two in each place. Whole villages renounced their heathenism and destroyed everything connected with it. Hundreds of churches were built, some of them in solid granite, and over 100,000 people are said to have been baptized. In every church a Bible was placed and disciples or elders chosen, and then he passed on. For ten long years the people thus won worshipped and waited and prayed with no teacher and no outside encouragement. At the end of that time the Wesleyan missionary society sent one of its missionaries to enquire into the movement regarding which, for some time, reports had been reaching them. Everywhere the visitor was recieved with open arms and during the first twelve months following his visit 160 churches were handed over to the society with the names of thirty-two thousand converts. It could not be called a mass movement, it was an avalanche. The people literally threw themselves into the arms of the mission. Their one cry was 'Teach us about God—the God we have for ten years been trying to serve.'

An illustration that is even more striking is the remarkable awakening which is taking place among the Jews of Eastern Europe where literally thousands of Jews are turning to Christ. 'I know nothing so thrilling' writes one who has been intimately connected with the whole movement, 'as men kneeling down, seventy of them' at one time, in Budapest alone, at the close of one meeting, 'fifteen of them doctors of philosophy, of law, of science, of medicine, and dedicating their lives to the service of Christ among their own people. In Russia such men are going out two by two as in our Lord's day. There has never been anything like it since the days of the early church. They are going out without money, not knowing where their bread is to come from on the morrow, and are preaching the gospel to Jew and Gentile alike.'

Something like this must have been the experience of those first-century missionaries as they went from place to place proclaiming the message of a crucified but risen Redeemer. And yet how little is known of the feverish activity of that early church as it sought to give effect to the Master's last command in the cities and country districts of those eastern lands.

It is a surprise to most people to learn that there was a large and wide-spread Christian community throughout the whole of Central Asia in the first centuries of the present era and that such countries as Afghanistan and Tibet which are spoken of to-day as lands still closed to the gospel message were

centres of Christian activity long before ever Muhammad was born or the Krishna legend had been heard of.

This may be due partly to the mistaken impression that the Roman empire dominated the whole world and that outside the range of its operations there was nothing of any importance to record.

The territory of the Roman empire lay mainly in Europe and in that part of Asia to the west of the Euphrates. But to the east of the Euphrates, at the time when Rome was at the zenith of its power, there existed an empire, first under the Parthian Arsacids and later under the Persian Sassanians—the sixth and seventh of Rawlinson's great oriental monarchies—which rivalled that of Rome both in extent and power. It extended to and included a considerable part of modern India, and was the only empire able to withstand successfully Roman aggression.

A second reason why so little is known of the 'Church of the East,' as the church that carried the gospel to these eastern lands is officially designated, is that when the Muhammadan deluge swept over Asia, especially in its latest form under Tamerlane, the records of countless Christian monasteries throughout the whole continent were ruthlessly destroyed, scarcely a vestige being left.

The centre of this marvellous church was first in Edessa and then in the Persian province of Adiabene. With its ecclesiastical headquarters at Ctesiphon-Seleucia on the Tigris it spread west and south

to the Red Sea and east and north east throughout the whole of Persia, including, as Persia then did, Afghanistan and the northern part of India. Then stimulated by persecutions surpassing anything ever experienced by the churches of the West, and nourished by its wonderful missionary monastic schools which poured forth a constant stream of missionary volunteer ascetics, its energies overran the boundaries of empire and reached out to the regions beyond.

Through the whole of Central Asia, Turkestan, Mongolia, China and Japan its messengers wended their way. They were checked neither by Siberian snows nor by the tropical heat of Java and the adjoining islands.

There is evidence that there were Christians in Japan before the close of the eighth century. That there were not only strong Christian communities, but Christian kings and Christian generals in China and in the countries adjoining, before the middle of the seventh century, is equally well authenticated. The same is true of Mongolia, Siberia in the neighbourhood of Lake Baikal, India north as well as south, Ceylon, Burmah and the straits of Malacca. Indeed the difficulty is to find a place in all Asia where Nestorian Christians or missionaries had not gone. They occupied positions of influence and importance, and one at least of the Mongol emperors is known to have been a Christian, while the wives of several were Christians and exerted a wholesome Christian influence. Wherever they went they carried their culture with them and taught the

people the art of letters. The Philippine islands were so far advanced at the time of the Spanish conquest A.D. 1569, that ability to read and write was more generally diffused there than among the common people of Europe. There were many villages where not a single boy or girl could be found who could not read and write. The native language was called Tagal, one of the most highly developed of the Malayo-Polynesian forms of speech, and alphabetic writing was in common use.

After the arrival of the Spaniards the people of Luzon made translations of every kind of literature from Spanish into Tagal.[1] For the ability to do this they were almost certainly indebted in the first instance to the missionary teachers of the 'Church of the East.'

From about the end of the second century until the beginning of the fourteenth this church was noted for its missionary zeal, and then came the tragedy of its eclipse and practical disappearance from the greater part of the area in which it once held sway.

This was due to various causes. In India the so-called Asokan rock and pillar inscriptions dating from A.D. 200 to A.D. 300 and the invention of the Krishna and other avatars of Vishnu, not earlier than A.D. 600, were, it is claimed, meant to check the progress that Christianity was then making, but the chief factor in the eclipse and final extermination of Christianity from northern and central India and

[1] Blair and Robertson, *The Philippines*, Vol. I, p. 80.

the whole of central Asia was the rise of Muhammadanism dating from A.D. 622. The last emperor of the Sassanian dynasty was defeated by the Muhammadans about the middle of the seventh century. With the fall of the Persian empire the way was opened for the spread of Islam over the whole of Persia, and although not all Moslem rulers were anti-Christian, most of them were, and the disqualifications under which Christians were placed led either to wholesale secessions to Muhammadanism on the part of the nominal Christians, or to the migration to other lands of many of the more genuine followers of Christ.

Beyond the borders of Persia the progress of Islam was much slower and it was many years before it secured a footing in Transoxania and further east. The accession of Seljuk and other Turks to Muhammadanism at the end of the tenth century not only saved Islam from extinction but brought new life to the Abbasid Khalifate. At the same time it led to increased persecution of the Christians—the new converts to Islam proving more antagonistic to Christianity than the Abbasides themselves. This experience was repeated two centuries later when the Mongol viceroys and Il-khans of Persia embraced the Muhammadan faith; but of all others the most bitter persecutor was Tamerlane, obsessed as he was by the determination to extirpate Christianity from his dominions.

To give a connected account of the missionary enterprise of this most missionary of all churches

and at the same time to indicate reasons for its almost total disappearance from a large part of the area where it once flourished is one of the objects of this treatise.

In dealing with the subject the church referred to is frequently called the 'Church of the East,' the designation by which it was officially known—the only designation that was really applicable in the first four centuries. At other times, and more particularly in the later centuries, it is described as the Nestorian church. The two designations refer to one and the same community. How the latter epithet came to be applied is dealt with in Appendix A.

NESTORIAN MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE

CHAPTER I

THE CHURCH IN PERSIA; ITS MISSIONARY CENTRE

The Missionary propaganda of the 'Church of the East' is a subject of absorbing interest. In order to understand the enthusiasm that characterized it and the rapidity with which it spread throughout Asia one must first examine its home base, viz., the church in Persia in the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. This was the centre from which the evangel was carried to the furthest limits of China, Mongolia, Siberia, Japan and India.

Throughout the first two centuries of the present era the Parthians were the dominant race in Persia. In A.D. 226 the Sassanid Persian dynasty overthrew the Arsacids and succeeded the Parthians in the possession of Iran.

The religion of the Persians was dualism or Mazdaeism—another name for Zoroastrianism. The Persians were fire-worshippers. Their modern representatives in India are the Parsees, one of the most progressive and enterprising races in that country. They had a hierarchy of priests called Mobeds, under a chief called the Mobedan Mobed, and observed very

'elaborate principles of ritual cleanliness and defilement.' 'The Mobed wore a covering over the mouth when tending the holy fire lest his breath defile it. A dead body and anything connected with the dead were considered unclean and polluted. A corpse may not defile earth, fire or water.'[1] Hence the method of exposing their dead on 'Towers of Silence' to be eaten by vultures.

It is, however, not to Persia proper, but to Edessa, modern Urfa in northern Mesopotamia, seventy-eight miles south west of Diarbeker, the capital of the small state of Osrhœne, that one must look for the beginning of that great missionary movement which had such far-reaching results. Osrhœne, a sort of buffer state between Parthia and Rome, maintained a semi-independence under the suzerainty of Parthia until A.D. 216, when the Romans took possession and made it a Roman colony.

There is much that is traditional in the happenings of those early days. The Assyrian Christians[2] believe that Christianity was brought to Edessa in the first century by Addai or Thaddæus, who is supposed to have been Thaddæus the apostle, and one of the seventy. He is said to have been sent there by St. Thomas. For that reason, among others, the Edessenes believed that their church stood in a peculiarly close relationship to St. Thomas. Judas Thomas, as he is called in the *Doctrine of Addai*, was looked upon as in a special sense their

[1] Fortescue, *Lesser Eastern Churches*, p. 125.
[2] Yohanan, *The Death of a Nation*, p. 36.

own Apostle, and one of the treasures of the Edessene church was a letter said to have been received by them from St. Thomas, from India. That such letters were sent is definitely stated in *The Doctrine of the Apostles* (Cureton's *Ancient Syriac documents*), and it is certain that long before the close of the first century A.D., Edessa had become a strong Christian centre. Rawlinson refers to Christianity as spreading in Parthia as early as A.D. 114,[1] and when Ardashir, the first Sassanian king, gained a decisive victory over Artaban, the last monarch of the Parthian dynasty in A.D. 225, and the Sassanians succeeded the Arsacids as rulers of the 'East,' he found strong Christian communities already existing, and recognized them as a 'melet' or subject race of the empire.[2] A tradition bearing on the spread of the gospel in Persia speaks of Mari the disciple of Thaddæus as having been sent as a missionary to Seleucia by his fellow workers of Edessa. He found the soil so hard and the people so unresponsive that he wished to return. He wrote to those who had sent him saying 'the inhabitants are worthless heathen. I am not able to do any good. . . . I shall return to you or go elsewhere.' His fellow Christians, however, would not agree, and wrote to him that he must sow and till 'those hills and mountains so that they might bring forth fruit for an offering to the Lord.' He continued at his post, working also in Adiabene,

[1] Rawlinson, *Sixth Oriental Monarchy*, p. 300.
[2] Yohanan, *The Death of a Nation*, p. 38.

and his efforts were crowned with such success that large numbers of the people of the province of Adiabene, between the Greater and Lesser Zab rivers, became followers of Christ. Adiabene, with its capital Arbel, thereafter shares with Edessa the glory of being the centre from which the gospel spread throughout the whole of Persia and thence to the regions beyond. In the reign of Marcus Aurelius, A.D. 161–180, Christianity is referred to as spreading not only in Parthia but in Media, Persia and Bactria and as 'steadily increasing among all ranks.'[1] And by the time of Abd-Mshikha[2] (A.D. 190–225), the last Bishop of Arbel prior to the advent of the Sassanian dynasty, the church is reported as extending from the mountains of Kurdistan to the Persian Gulf. In that area there were said to be no less than twenty-five bishops. Mshikha-Zkha, a writer of the sixth century, mentions the names of seventeen of their sees, one of which was among the Dailamites in the vicinity of the Caspian Sea.

Mingana is of opinion that 'the city of Arbel played, for the countries extending east, north and south of the Tigris, a rôle no less important (if somewhat less known) than that played by Edessa in the Trans-Euphratic provinces of the Roman and Persian empires in particular, and in Syria and Palestine in general.'[3] He quotes Sozomen as saying

[1] Yohanan, *The Death of a Nation*, p. 39.
[2] Mingana, *Sources Syriaques*, i, p. 27 quoted by Yohanan, p. 39.
[3] Mingana A., *Early Spread of Christianity*: Bulletin of John Rylands Library, Vol. IX, No. 2, p. 300.

'that the majority of the inhabitants of Adiabene were Christians.' The immense majority of these and of the Christians in Persia generally 'were of Persian and not Semitic or Aramean birth and extraction. Many were born of Christian parents who originally belonged to Zoroastrianism.' 'Middle Persian or Pahlawi was in constant use among Persian Christian doctors.'

The ordination of Pkidha first bishop of Arbel dates back to the end of the first century.

In the early days there was probably very little organization. The bishops or presbyters, as they were frequently designated, were like pilgrim preachers, passing from place to place and looking after their people as best they could. They probably proceeded on much the same lines as those recorded of St. Paul in the Acts of the Apostles. In all probability also they supported themselves as he did. Many of them were traders; others were craftsmen such as carpenters, smiths and weavers. One of the complaints brought against them by sacerdotalists in connection with their missionary work in later times was that the merchant could with ease lay aside his calling and become a monk or presbyter, and *vice versa*.

By the middle of the second century the church of Edessa possessed the four gospels in Aramaic, and it is a fair conjecture that each of its missionary preachers would carry with him a gospel at least, if not Tatian's harmony of the four, the so-

called Diatessaron.[1] (The Syriac Old Testament, probably the work of Jews, may be older than the Gospels.)

It is possible that even then there existed a school of the prophets in Edessa, and that from it a constant succession of itinerant missionaries went forth to the remotest provinces of the Persian empire, Arabia and other neighbouring countries. One thing is certain, that in the following century (A.D. 363), when Nisibis, the great military fort on the frontier, and five provinces were ceded by the Romans to Persia, the theological school then at Nisibis was transferred to Edessa. It was re-opened under the presidency of Ephraim, the friend of James the well known bishop of Nisibis, and in a short time became a centre of theological instruction and of western culture for all the Christians of the East. This was during the great persecution under Sapor II referred to later, which made it impossible to continue the school at Nisibis.[2] 'There were in Persia, as far as we know, no Christian schools at that time, though Magian schools abounded, and the "teacher" was a recognized and honoured grade in their hierarchy. The Christian who desired learning (*and the Assyrian thirst for it is keener than even his thirst for money*) must cross the frontier to where Christianity ruled.'

From Edessa then, as from Arbel and Adiabene, flowed streams of blessing to all parts of the Persian empire. In the next century, when the eastern Roman

[1] Wright, *History of Syriac Literature*, pp. 7, 8.
[2] Wigram, *History of the Assyrian Church*, p. 148.

empire had become Monophysite, the school at Edessa was suppressed, and Ibas, who was then at the head of it, removed to Nisibis and opened a school there which soon began to exercise a widespread and far reaching influence. The ban on Christian schools in Persia had by that time been removed.

One element which must have tended to strengthen the missionary activity of the 'Church of the East' in the early centuries was the stream of refugees which turned towards Persia to escape the persecutions in the eastern Roman empire. It is said that during the reign of Decius, A.D. 249, a great multitude of Christians in all the Roman provinces were cut off by various punishments and sufferings in a persecution 'more cruel and terrific than any that had preceded it.' 'Immense numbers being dismayed, not so much by the fear of death as by dread of long continued tortures, professed to renounce Christianity.'

In the time of Diocletian, A.D. 303–304, there were insurrections in Syria and Armenia, the blame for which was laid upon the Christians, and 'a great number of excellent men were either capitally punished or condemned to the mines.' In these days the persecution of Christians in Persia had not yet begun: Christianity, as already stated, being recognized by the state as a subject 'melet.' It was not until Christianity became the official religion of the Roman empire that trouble arose in Persia. We cannot doubt, therefore, that as happened in France consequent on the revocation of the *Edict of Nantes*,

numbers of the very finest Christians, especially those in the eastern provinces of the Roman empire, must have saved themselves by crossing the border into Persia where they were sure of a welcome by those of their own persuasion. This was repeated a century and a half later after the Nestorian controversy and the development of Monophysitism in the Byzantine portion of the empire.

Some of those who had supported Nestorius at Ephesus were won over to the side of Cyril by tardy concessions, and they or their successors subscribed, even if reluctantly, to the decrees of Chalcedon. Those who dissented were crushed by penal laws and driven from the empire. By the time of Justinian, A.D. 527, it would have been difficult to find a church within the whole Roman empire that shared the views of Nestorius or adhered to the creed of Nicea.[1] Outside of those limits and carrying their faith with them, those who had crossed the borders rather than deny their faith 'discovered a new world in which they might hope for liberty,' and met congenial companions animated by the same devotion to Christ that they themselves had.[2] 'The bigotry of Justinian was punished by the emigration of his most pious and industrious subjects. They transported into Persia the arts both of peace and war.'[3] 'Like the Huguenots who after the revocation of the *Edict of Nantes* brought the silk trade to England, like the Pilgrim Fathers who carried the

[1] Gibbon, Vol. VIII, p. 339 (12 Vol. edition).
[2] Idem, p. 340.
[3] Adeney, W. F., *The Greek and Eastern Churches*, pp. 479, 480.

best of Puritan energy out of England to found a new world, the Nestorians came to Mesopotamia with the arts and crafts of life—carpenters, smiths, weavers, the best of the artisan class. They came to start industries and lay the foundations of manufacturing prosperity in the land of their adoption.' 'Nor did they go merely as exiles. Their very trouble converted them into missionaries.' 'At home they were denounced as heretics, abroad, where no rumours of miserable doctrinal disputes were heard, they simply journeyed as enthusiastic missionaries of the gospel.' They were remarkably successful in winning converts in one place after another as they penetrated further and further into the unknown lands of Asia. Such an influx of new blood must have given a great impetus to the cause of Christ in Persia. The result was twofold: firstly, 'The increase in numbers and the zeal and devotion of men who were exiles for their faith stimulated the churches,' and made them still more so, centres of missionary propaganda; and secondly, their advent led to a change of policy on the part of the Persian government towards the Christians. In former times this had been adverse, especially during the period A.D. 339–379, when multitudes suffered martyrdom under Sapor II. The fires of persecution tended to purge the church, and deepened its spirituality; but the price paid was heavy.

When the Magi, another name for the Zoroastrian priesthood, stirred up opposition against the Chris-

tians on religious grounds, and in the interest of Zoroastrianism, the Sassanian kings, suspicious of the emissaries of the gospel, had been inclined to look upon the latter as allies of their hereditary foes, as those who had embraced the faith might also favour the cause of these same foes. The influx of Nestorians, however, and the fact that they were no longer in communion with either Rome, or Constantinople, or Antioch, or Alexandria, meant that they were no longer a political danger to Persia and when, according to Gibbon, one prelate represented Nestorius as the friend of Persia,[1] Piroz (A.D. 457–484) was won over and ready to comply with the prelate's request that in order to secure the fidelity of his Christian subjects he would give preference to the victims and enemies of the Roman tyrant.

The Persian kings and the Nestorians now tended to draw together in self-defence against attacks from the Roman foe. The original Christians, too, joined hands with the new comers.[2] Houses of charity were endowed for the education of orphans and foundlings, with the result that crowds of fugitives were attracted from all parts of the empire. The Nestorians and the Magi by mutual concessions softened the antagonism, due to other than political grounds, existing between them. Part of the concession on the part of the Nestorians was the toning down of the rigour of their asceticism in the matter of the celibacy of the clergy, which the Magi

[1] Gibbon, Vol. VIII. p. 348.
[2] Idem, pp. 340, 342.

especially objected to, and in the year A.D. 499 at a synod presided over by Babaeus the patriarch of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, they abolished all clerical celibacy, permitting even bishops to marry.

Although this relaxation was regarded with horror by the bishops of the West, it seems to have worked well in the 'Church of the East,' which continued to flourish and expand. Liberty to marry was later again withdrawn and the Nestorian Church assimilated its custom to that of the Greek church in requiring its bishops to be celibate. The period at which the restriction as regards marriage in the case of the higher clergy was re-introduced is not known. They were still permitted to marry in the seventh century, and one writer speaks of the metropolitan of Nisibis, himself a married man, as having in the twelfth century convened a synod which decreed that bishops should be allowed to marry.

The first to recognize the importance of a regular organization in the 'Church of the East' was Papa, metropolitan of Seleucia from about A.D. 280. He was a man of considerable learning and ability but somewhat hasty in temper. He wished to make Seleucia the head centre of the church, and though at first unsuccessful he ultimately succeeded and, with the consent of the other metropolitans, assumed the title of Catholicos.

In A.D. 424 at a Council held in Seleucia, it was decided that the Catholicos should be called by the title of Patriarch and should be entirely independent of Antioch or any Western see. This was emphasized

again at another council held in A.D. 498. Antioch at that time was strongly Monophysite and anathematised the 'Church of the East.' The two had, therefore, nothing in common, and entire separation was the natural outcome.

Persia was to a great extent immune from the heresies that troubled the church of the West. Christianity had been recognized as a 'melet' but it was a Nestorian 'melet,' and in its early stages no other sect was tolerated. During the wars with Rome, however, it sometimes happened that whole districts of the invaded territories were depopulated and the inhabitants transported to Persia. Many of the inhabitants were Christians, and during the time of the Monophysite domination in Antioch, Alexandria and Constantinople, those thus transported were mostly if not entirely Monophysite or Jacobite Christians[1] They and their bishops, who were transported with them, settled in different parts of the country. In A.D. 540, Chosroes I. carried a huge train of captives, mostly Monophysite, from Antioch to Seleucia and built a town called New Antioch for their reception.[2] In A.D. 573 the experiment was repeated and 2,90,000 captives brought from Rome to Persian territory were settled in various towns and formed a welcome addition to the hitherto numerically weak Monophysite body.

The wide and continuous expansion of Christianity, as the result of the labours of Nestorian

[1] O'Leary, *The Syriac Church and Fathers*, p. 135.
[2] Wright, *History of Syriac Literature*, p. 241.

missionaries, added an immense extent of territory to the jurisdiction of the Patriarch, all the converts in the new districts being taught to look upon him as their ecclesiastical head. The seat of the patriarchate was in the twin cities of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, one on either bank of the Tigris, the centre of trade and travel between Europe and Western Asia on the one hand and India and China on the other. 'It was a magnificent centre for the missionary church that was entering on its great task of carrying the gospel to the far east.'

Wiltsch quotes Assemani as stating that Manes or M'ana the eighteenth metropolitan of Seleucia was the first to become a spontaneous convert to Nestorianism and that he was deposed on that account in A.D. 431.[1] Assemani, however, has overlooked the fact that Nestorius himself was only condemned in A.D. 431. Further, Manes was metropolitan or Catholicos not in A.D. 431 but in A.D. 420 long before Nestorianism had ever been heard of. He was deposed by the king not on account of his doctrines but because he was supposed to have been cognizant, as Catholicos, of the action of two men Abda and Narses (who afterwards suffered martyrdom) who had extinguished the sacred fire in one of the temples.

By the end of the fifth century and the middle of the sixth the area occupied by the Nestorians for which the patriarch of Seleucia was responsible,

[1] Wiltsch, *Geography and Statistics of the Church*, pp. 226–238.

included all the countries to the east and those immediately to the west of the Euphrates.[1] These were Egypt, Syria, Arabia, Socotra, Mesopotamia, Chaldaea, Persia, Media, Bactria, Hyrcania and India.[2] Cosmas Indicopleustes in his *Christian Topography* adds Calliana, Male, and Sieledіva (Ceylon). This would seem to indicate that the India referred to was North rather than South India. Subordinate to the patriarch were nine metropolitans and there were clergy in Bactria, among the Huns, in Persarmenia, Media, Elam and throughout Persia, and in the island of Dioscoris in the Indian Ocean.[3]

The province of Patriarchalis had Cascara or Cascar in northern Mesopotamia near to the Euphrates as the seat of its metropolitan. Abdas the third metropolitan fell a martyr in the thirty-sixth year of the persecution by Sapor II.

There were bishoprics at Anbar or Enbar, a city of Chaldaea belonging to the territory of Bagdad, at Sena and Elsen at the mouth of the Lesser Zab on the Tigris, and at Badraia near Seleucia. One writer says the number of churches 'from the Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea was almost infinite and their faith was conspicuous in the number and sanctity of their monks and martyrs.'

[1] Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, Vol. III, ii, pp. 81–91.
[2] Wiltsch, *Geography and Statistics of the Church*, pp. 226–238.
[3] Assemani, Vol. III, ii, p. 708.

Note. B. J. Kidd holds that the title of Catholicos was adopted at the council of Seleucia in A.D. 410 and that it was originally a civil title applied to imperial ministers of finance whether for the Diocese or Empire and came to mean Procurator General, some one's deputy, like the Vice Chancellor of Oxford University. He claims too that the Catholicos of Seleucia was subordinate to the Patriarch of Antioch.[1] Kidd is obviously wrong both as to the date of the title Catholicos and as to Seleucia being in any sense subordinate to Antioch.[2] The first to be designated Catholicos was Papa, metropolitan of Seleucia from A.D. 280 to 328. The title was conceded to Papa by the Council held in A.D. 315 and Assemani speaks of him as primate of Seleucia at the time of the Nicene Council.[3] The title of Patriarch as already stated dates officially from the council held in A.D. 424, but had been in use for some time prior to that. Nowhere do we find any indication of the subordination of any one patriarchate to another. G. Bartoli in his book *The Primitive Church and the Primacy of Rome* has conclusively disproved this as regards Rome. What applies to Rome applies equally to the other patriarchates. Not only so but the Church of the East at the council referred to (A.D. 424) definitely repudiated any such claim. As a matter of fact even the western patriarchates in their fully developed form only date from the time of the Council of Constantinople. Fisher writing regarding this says, 'about that time (A.D. 381) the name of patriarch which had previously been a name (or title) of respect applied to every bishop, was appropriated exclusively to the bishops of the great sees of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria and Antioch.'[4] To these later on Jerusalem was added because of its historic importance. Had Seleucia been in any way subordinate to Antioch the fact would certainly have been noted.

Kidd is also wrong in speaking of the church in Persia as schismatic.[5] Neale says that though heretical the Nestorians can hardly be called schismatical because they have constantly retained their (apostolic) succession and for centuries had no branch of the true church co-existent with them in their territories.[6]

The schismatics were really those of Constantinople. Antioch and Alexandria when they became Monophysites, as they did officially in A.D. 482, when the emperor Zeno addressed his 'Henoticon' or instrument of union to the Byzantine bishops: The Church of the East and the Patriarchate of Rome alone remained Dyophysite.

1 Kidd, *History of the Church*, to A.D. 461, p. 269.
2 Wigram, *History of the Assyrian Church*, p. 34 ff.
3 Assemani, Vol. III, ii. p. 415.
4 G. P. Fisher, *The History of the Church*, pp. 104, 105.
5 Kidd, *History of the Church* to A.D. 461, p. 272.
6 Neale, *History of the Holy Eastern Church*, Vol. I, pp. 151, 152.

CHAPTER II

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS—PERSECUTION AND MONASTIC BIBLE TRAINING SCHOOLS

Persecution—Reference was made in the previous chapter to the added vigour that came to the Church of the East with the great influx of Christians as a result of the persecutions under Decius and Diocletian, and later, from the persecution, by the Monophysites of the Eastern Roman empire, of those who either sympathized with Nestorius or remained orthodox instead of becoming Monophysite. The former preceded and the latter followed the Persian persecutions under Sapor II, A.D. 339–379, Bahram V, A.D. 420, and Yezd'gerd II in A.D. 438.

The importance of the Persian persecutions can scarcely be overestimated as a contributing factor in the marvellous expansion of Nestorian Missions that took place in the fourth, fifth and subsequent centuries. They were much more severe and extended over a much wider area than any of those which took place under the Roman emperors. It was a repetition, but on a very much larger scale, of Acts viii. 1: 'At that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judæa and Samaria . . . . therefore, they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word.' The persecution

under Sapor continued for a longer period, but those under Bahram and Yezd'gerd were much more severe. A countless number suffered death rather than deny their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Some became apostates, but many crossed the frontier into Roman territory on the north (reversing what had taken place under the Roman persecutions), into Arabia on the south and west, to the furthest extremes of the Persian empire in the east and north-east, and into the territories beyond, such as Transoxania and Turkestan. Wherever they went, whether merchants or artisans, clergy or laity, they carried the gospel with them. Supporting themselves by the labour of their own hands, or filling appointments as secretaries, physicians or stewards in the households of the nobles and princes of those lands to which they went, they were one and all missionaries of the Cross.

By the time of Sapor II the Roman empire had become officially Christian. Constantine even claimed a sort of protectorate over all Christians and wrote to Sapor on the subject, asking protection and favour for the Christians residing in Persia.[1] The two empires being almost constantly at war, it was only natural, as has already been indicated, that the Persians should be suspicious of those holding the Roman faith lest they should be in the pay of the Romans and play the part of spies. The fact that the Christians, including those who spoke Persian, used Syriac in their church services tended to foster this

[1] O'Leary, *The Syriac Church and Fathers*, p. 74.

suspicion. Add to this the jealousy of the Mazdean hierarchy with which the king was surrounded, and it can easily be understood how, when Sapor began a war with the Romans, he naturally began to persecute the Christians at the same time. The Jews also were suspected of helping to further the aims of the Magians by adding to the flame of hatred against the Christians whom they also hated.[1] They were in favour with the queen, and were supposed to have used their influence with her to injure the Christians. At all events, it is certain that the Jews as well as the heathen rejoiced in the distress that the cruelty of Sapor brought on the Christians. Noeldeke quoted by Labourt thinks that the accusation against the Jews was justified. Duval reserves his judgment.

The first 'Firman' of persecution ordered all Christians to pay double tax as a contribution to the cost of the war, and the Catholicos or Patriarch, as representing the church, was ordered to collect the amount. This Mar Shimun, the then Catholicos, refused to do on the grounds that his people were too poor to pay, and, that he was not a tax-collector. [2] His arrest and the destruction of all Christian churches were immediately ordered.[3] He was arrested at Seleucia and taken to Karka d'Ledan where the king then was. His farewell blessing to his flock has been handed down to us: 'May the cross of our Lord' he says 'be the protection of

[1] Labourt, *Le Christianisme dans l'empire perse*, p. 58.
[2] Wigram, *History of the Assyrian Church*, p. 61.
[3] Labourt, *Le Christianisme dans l'empire perse*, p. 64.

the people of Jesus. May the peace of God be with the servants of God and stablish your hearts in the faith of Christ, in tribulation and in ease, in life and in death, now and for evermore.' [1]

He was offered freedom, not only for himself but for his 'melet' or people, if he would worship the sun only once. 'The sun went into mourning when its creator died' said Shimun. The king begged him by the memory of their personal friendship to yield, but the Catholicos remained firm, and on the morning of the first day of the feast of unleavened bread, in the year A.D. 339, along with five bishops and a hundred minor clergy, probably Rabbans, he sealed his testimony with his blood. Mar Shimun, the last of his company to suffer martyrdom, died for two of the noblest causes for which it is possible for man to suffer, viz., his faith in God and his duty to his people. The persecution thus begun lasted for forty years. It is not easy nor is it necessary to give a connected account of all that took place. All that is required for the purpose and scope of this book is to illustrate, by a few incidents, the steadfastness and courage with which it was borne. When the martyrdom of Mar Shimun and his companions was taking place, one of those under condemnation, named Hanania, seemed to waver. At the sight of the sword which was about to fall he trembled and appeared as if about to yield. At this moment a high official in the palace, a prefect by the name of Pusaik or Pusak, called out from the midst of the crowd of

[1] Labourt, *Le Christianisme dans l'empire perse*, p. 58.

onlookers, 'Do not be afraid, Hanania. Shut your eyes a little that you may open them on the light of Christ.' Hardly had he said these words when Pusak was seized by the guards and dragged to the palace before the king. Sapor, annoyed by the intervention of this nobleman and afraid perhaps of finding himself surrounded by officers won over to this new doctrine and who might avenge the death of their co-religionists on his own person, angrily asked Pusak, 'Have I not given you work to do? Why then do you ignore my orders and stay to look at the punishment of these good-for-nothings?' Pusak replied, 'Would to God that my work might increase through their idleness and that my life might be changed by their death. As for the work you have given me to do: I esteem it not because it is full of cares, and I value the punishment to which you have condemned them because it is full of joy.' Incensed, the king replied: 'You ask death in place of your work? you wish to be treated like them?' The happy man answered, 'I am a Christian, I believe in their God. That is why I envy their punishment and despise your dignity.' The king, greatly angered by this, cried out, 'May he not die like the others, but because he has despised my majesty, and has spoken with me as an equal, seize his tongue and tear it out by the roots through his throat so that those who are living may fear me because of him.'[1] The orders of the king

[1] Labourt, *Le Christianisme dans l'empire perse*, Second Edition, p. 67 *f.*

were immediately carried out, and Pusak was put to death most cruelly.

A 'Firman' is not so much a command as a permission to act. It meant the releasing of that race hatred and fanaticism which had hitherto been held in check. We have had illustrations of what that may mean in our own day in connection with the massacres of Armenians in Turkey and the Boxer rebellion in China. One cause of offence was that the Christians differed from the Zoroastrians in their habits and customs, as for example, in the burial of the dead and the tendency to look upon celibacy as a superior form of living, both customs being very repugnant to the Magian hierarchy.

The persecution proper began with an indiscriminate massacre of Christians around Susa. It lasted for a fortnight and was probably reproduced in other Christian centres. Generally it was officials of every kind who took the initiative. Satraps, or Mazbans, Rads, or simple heads of villages, could at their pleasure arrest or imprison the followers of Christ. Any man of position, or at least a provincial governor or Mobed, could examine the Christians and put them to death. This they did, sometimes without examination. Some governors, however, did not act on the 'Firman.'

Bishops or presbyters were especially the objects of persecution. Two successors of Mar Shimun were put to death within six years and the office of Catholicos then remained vacant for twenty years. Some were stoned by renegade Christians as the

price of their life. When the war with Julian came to an end, as a condition of peace, the Romans handed over to Sapor five provinces containing six bishoprics and a population largely Christian. The Christians were immediately deported to distant provinces of Persia and orders given to deal severely with all the leaders who would not abandon the religion of Cæsar. One detachment of Christians with a bishop and several clergy were given the choice of apostacy or death, but out of three hundred[1] only twenty-five accepted their lives on the terms offered. Other companies were treated in like manner.

Women also were numbered among the martyrs. Tarbo the sister of Mar Shimun, a Rabbanyati or deaconess was arrested in Seleucia. The queen had fallen ill and the Jews persuaded her that her illness was due to the sorceries of the Christians, and particularly of the sister of Shimun who thus avenged the death of her brother. The queen, believing the insinuations of the Jews, had Tarbo, her sister and their servant, arrested and brought to the capital. The trial was conducted by the chief Mobed. Notwithstanding their protests they were condemned to death, and on the advice of the accusers were cut in pieces. The queen was then carried in a litter in the midst of their dead bodies so as to ward off their so called malpractices. Chief among the persecutors were, Ardasir, governor of Adiabene, the Mobed

[1] Labourt, *Le Christianisme dans l'empire perse*, p. 79

Adargusnasp and Adarsabur, the Mobedan Mobed or chief of the Mobeds.[1]

In A.D. 345, a layman by the name of Hanania arrested at Arbel by the order of the Mobed, Adursag, was subjected to the torture of the iron combs, and having been left for dead, was rescued by fellow Christians and carried to his house, where he recovered sufficiently to express anew his faith in Christ and then died. Many of the martyrs were natives of Adiabene.[2] The greater number of the inhabitants of this province seem at that time to have been Christians. Daniel, a presbyter, and Uarda or Rose, a consecrated virgin, after suffering torments for a period of three months and after having their feet bored with sharp irons, were placed in freezing water for five days and then beheaded.

From the same province, one hundred and twenty Christians, nine being consecrated virgins and the rest ecclesiastics of different ranks, were imprisoned in a filthy dungeon at Seleucia. Here they were succoured by a noble Christian lady named Jardundoeta, a native of Arbel. On the morning of their martyrdom she commended herself to their prayers, arranged for their honourable interment and was privileged to see them enter victorious into glory.

In A.D. 346 a fresh edict against the Christians was issued, and vast numbers suffered throughout the various provinces, but their names have been lost.[3] One James and his sister Mary 'a daughter

[1] Labourt, *Le Christianisme dans l'empire perse*, pp. 69, 70.
[2] Neale, *The Patriarchate of Antioch*, p. 129.
[3] Idem, p. 130.

of the covenant' were arrested by Narses Tamaspur, a violent persecutor, who commanded them to feed on some preparation of blood. Rather than do this the brother and sister 'submitted their necks to the axe.' An apostate noble named Mahdades was entrusted with their execution and beheaded them with his own hands.

When the persecution began, modern Kurdistan, Khuzistan and Louristan must have been almost entirely Christian. Bishops were plentiful,[1] presbyters were stationed in almost every village of importance, and consecrated virgins were numerous. One Paul, a rich presbyter in the little town of Casciaz, was accused by Narses Tamaspur, the persecutor already referred to. When planning to seize the presbyter, the police arrested five 'daughters of the covenant, named Thecla, Mary, Martha, a second Mary, and Anna.' The wretched presbyter in the hope of saving his property abjured Christ. Tamaspur, disappointed at the thought of losing Paul's money and wishing to prevent his persisting in apostacy, appointed him executioner of the 'consecrated virgins,' hoping that a task of such awful disgrace would compel him to retract his abjuration. And just as Iscariot betrayed Christ for the pieces of silver, Paul stooped even to this for gain. The virgins having received 100 stripes were handed over to their late presbyter to be slain. 'Are we, they said, to be made a sacrifice by those

[1] Neale, *The Patriarchate of Antioch*, p. 130.

very hands from which so recently we received that holy thing, the sacrifice and propitiation of the whole world?' But so it was. They were beheaded by him. This, however, did not save him. That very night the guards of Narses entered the prison and slew the miserable apostate.

Many other instances of those who suffered in this long drawn out persecution under Sapor II might be given. It is, however, sufficient to say that according to the ecclesiastical historian Sozomen (ii. 14) the martyrs whose names are known numbered 16,000, while there were countless unrecorded sufferers.[1] Most of those whose names are known belonged to the town of Ledan where the persecution was most severe. The records of other provinces or cities have either not been so fully kept or have been lost. Sapor II died in A.D. 379 and was succeeded by his brother Ardasher II, who reigned four years, and under whom the persecution continued in a modified form.

For thirty-seven years after the death of Ardasher in A.D. 383, the Christians in the Persian empire were left in comparative peace.[2] In A.D. 410 an agreement was reached between the council, which met at Seleucia in that year, and Yezd'gerd I, under which certain privileges and rights were secured to the Christians. This very fact, however, was a cause of offence to the Mazdean priesthood and to the Iranian nobles. So great was the power

[1] Labourt, *Le Christianisme dans l'empire perse*, p. 81.
[2] Idem, p. 84.

of these two bodies that even the king could not ignore them without danger to his throne as well as his life. The antagonism of the two parties to the Christian religion was aggravated by the growth in the Christian community that had taken place during the years of quiet when there seemed to be no longer any danger of martyrdom. New bishops had been appointed and new metropolitan sees formed, and worst of all, a great number of high officials of the state had indicated their adherence to the new religion. Even Yezd'gerd was troubled by this state of affairs and tried to compel those of the nobles who had been converted to apostatise; but without success. Still, with the exception of a few cases, brought about partly by the imprudence of some of the Christians at Hormizdardasir, a town of Huzistan, which led to the martyrdom of Mar Abda and a few others, peace was on the whole maintained and the pledges given by Yezd'gerd to the council of A.D. 410 observed, although Hoffmann asserts that he became a persecutor before his death and mentions several martyrdoms as having taken place during his reign.

Yezd'gerd I died in A.D. 420 and was succeeded by his son Bahram V surnamed Gor.[1] Under this emperor a most terrible persecution broke out all over the Persian empire. Theodoret, bishop of Cyr, writing about it says: 'It is not easy to describe the new kinds of punishment that the Persians invented to torment the Christians. They

[1] Labourt, *Le Christianisme dans l'empire perse*, p. 110.

flayed the hands of some and the backs of others. In the case of others again, they stripped the skin of the face from the forehead down to the chin. They tore their bodies with broken reeds causing them excruciating pain. Having dug great pits, they filled them with rats and mice and then cast the Christians into the pits first tying their hands and feet so that they could neither chase the animals away nor place themselves beyond their reach. The animals themselves having been kept without food, devoured these Christian confessors in the most cruel way.' [1]

Bahram is also reported as having driven many of the followers of Christ out of the kingdom altogether, pillaging their houses and depriving them of everything that they possessed. Others of them he banished to distant provinces so that they might not only be overwhelmed with troubles but might suffer on account of the war then raging in those parts.

In this way all who professed the Christian religion were persecuted so that they might deny the Lord Jesus Christ and return to the worship of other gods and to other religions. The property of the churches was seized including even the furniture they contained. The building materials were used for the construction of bridges, canals, etc. Precious metals were confiscated and sent to the royal treasury. Three martyrs named Hormizdas, Suenas and Benjamin are specially mentioned. The first two were of noble birth. The king divested

[1] Labourt, *Le Christianisme dans l'empire perse*, p. 111.

Hormizdas of all his dignities and made him an ordinary army-camel driver. Some days later he ordered him to be brought before him and had him clothed in linen garments. Then thinking he would be softened not only by the troubles which he had endured but by the kind treatment now being shown to him, the king addressed him as follows 'Do not be so obstinate. Deny the son of the carpenter.' Hormizdas, fired with zeal, tore the linen robe from his body in the presence of the king and said 'If you think that I will abandon piety for such a gift, keep your present with your impiety.' The king seeing this drove him from the palace quite naked. Suenas was robbed of all his wealth which was very considerable and obliged to obey the most wicked of his slaves. He had even to abandon his wife, but notwithstanding, remained firm and immovable. [1]

A man known as St. James the 'cut in pieces' (Fr. '*L'Intercis*'), an official belonging to the court, apostatised to please the king, but his action met with such reprobation from his relatives that he returned to the king, recanted his apostacy and declared himself a true Christian. The king in anger handed him over to the executioner who killed him by cutting off his members one after the other, hence the name of 'cut in pieces.' Peroz, originally of Beit Lapat, a rich man of noble lineage, also suffered capital punishment during this period. He was cast into prison with other Christians and denied the faith in order to escape punishment, but when

[1] Labourt, *Le Christianisme dans l'empire perse*, p. 111.

his parents and his wife turned from him in horror, he determined to return to the Christian fold and made anew a profession of Christianity. Denounced by Mihrsabur the chief of the Magi and the great enemy of the Christians, he was taken to Siarzur where the king then was. On his refusing to apostatize the second time, he was decapitated.[1]

Even more interesting from the historical point of view is the case of James the notary. Originally from the town of Karka d'Ersa, at twenty years of age he and fifteen fellow-servants of the king were cast into prison. They were threatened with confiscation of their goods unless they apostatized and when they refused to do so they were condemned to look after elephants the whole winter. After Easter, when the king according to custom removed to his summer quarters, they were set to repair and look after the roads on the royal route, including the cutting down of trees and the breaking of stones. From time to time the king chaffed them for their stupidity, but they replied, 'Everything that comes to us from your majesty is an honour except apostacy.' The summer being over, Bahram began his return journey to Ctesiphon, passing on the way the wild mountains of Belesfar. Mihrsabur informed the king that the constancy of the Christian captives encouraged the other Christians and prevented their denying their faith. 'What more can I do to them'? said the king. 'Their goods have been confiscated,

[1] Labourt, *Le Christianisme dans l'empire perse*, p. 112.

their houses have been sealed up and they themselves have been tortured.' 'Would that your majesty would command me, without blows and without murder, to make them apostatize' answered the wicked Mihrsabur. The king delivered them up to his discretion, forbidding, however, to put them to death. Mihrsabur stripped them naked, bound their hands behind their backs and ordered them to be taken each night to a desert place in the mountains where they were laid on their backs and given only a little bread and water. After they had undergone these tortures for a whole week, Mihrsabur called the guard and asked where the 'miserable Nazarenes' were. 'They are very near death' replied the guard. 'Go and tell them' he said 'that the king orders them to obey his wish and to worship the sun. If not, I shall put cords on their feet and will have them dragged all through the mountains until their flesh shall separate from their bones so that their bodies will remain among the stones and only the tendons attached to the skin will be left.' The guards carried out his instructions. Some were unconscious, others, overcome by pain, weakened. The governor loosed them without compelling them to worship the sun or the fire and led them back to Seleucia. When they had recovered from their wounds they fasted wept and prayed for their apparent defection. James, being of Roman extraction, had remained strong in the faith. He returned to his duties and reported to the bishops what was said in the palace, and what

Bahram meditated against the Christians and their churches, at the same time encouraging and comforting them. When he learned that in the court he was considered as having apostatized with his fellow servants, he returned to the town, clothed himself with sackcloth, and covering himself with ashes, gave himself to exercises of penitence. One of the servitors betrayed him. He had seen him reading the book of the gospels. Mihrsabur assembled the sixteen confessors. Questioning the first fifteen he asked if they had not recanted and carried out his wishes. They replied 'We have lost the life which you asked of us once. Do you ask us to apostatize a second time?' He released them and sent them to their homes. Then addressing James he said, 'as for you, have you not denied the faith of the Christians?' 'I have not denied the faith of the Christians,' said James, 'nor do I intend to do so. It is the faith of my fathers.' He was again brought before the king whom he reminded that his father Yezd'gerd had reigned twenty years in peace and prosperity and that all his enemies served him because he loved the Christians, but that when at the end of his life he changed his policy and became a persecutor and shed innocent blood, he died abandoned by all and his body did not even receive burial. Bahram, irritated by this condemned James to the punishment of 'The nine deaths' * and thus he died.[1]

* In 'the nine deaths' the members of the body were cut off one by one (1) the fingers of the hand (2) the toes (3) the wrist (4) the ankle (5) arms above elbows (6) knees (7) ears (8) nose and last the head.

[1] Labourt, *Le Christianisme dans l'empire perse*, pp. 115, 116.

All the Christians did not imitate the courage of these heroes. Many fled or remained hidden. The inhabitants of the territories bordering on Roman provinces and other countries crossed the frontier. The Mazdeans called in the help of the Bedouin and nomad subjects of the Persian king, commanding them to harass the Christians; and this they did, killing them in great numbers. It is recorded, however, of one of the Arabian princes named Aspebite, that when called to this task he refused, and instead of arresting the fugitives, helped them by every means in his power. Others of whom we have no record probably acted in the same way.

Officially, the persecution ceased in the year A.D. 422 when peace between the Romans and Persians was once more established. One of the terms of the treaty was that there should be liberty of conscience to the subjects of both sides. As a matter of fact, persecution continued in a modified form during a considerable portion of Bahram's reign and there were numbers of martyrdoms.

In A.D. 438 Bahram V died and was succeeded by his son Yezd'gerd II. At the outset of his career he was favourably inclined to the Christians, but in A.D. 448 persecution broke out afresh and in a most intense form.[1]

The king seems to have meant the persecution to be carried on throughout the empire but it appears to have been most severe in the province of Beth

[1] Labourt, *Le Christianisme dans l'empire perse*, p. 126.

Garmai.[1] At all events it is with reference to Beth Garmai alone that details are available.

A massacre of appalling magnitude is recorded as having taken place at Karka d'Beit Sluk, now known as Kirkuk, where, on a mound outside the city, ten bishops and 153,000 others are said to have been martyred, the slaughter lasting several days. The redness of the gravel of the hillock is said to have been caused by the blood of the martyrs.[1] A martyrium, was built over the spot, which it is claimed remains to this day. Wigram believes the present building to be at least on the lines of the original, and adds that the fact of the massacre is quite likely correct, even if the number was less than that stated.

Some were crucified, others stoned, and some again beheaded.[2] Clergy and laity alike suffered the most refined tortures. Incidents recorded as having taken place in connection with the massacre are also probably historically accurate, e.g., that of the woman called Sirin, who, with her two sons, came of her own accord to seek the martyrdom which she received.[3]

The person who took the most active part in the persecution, was Tamasgerd, an officer of the king, who was said to be so moved by the endurance of those who were put to death and so convinced that the faith which gave them strength to endure was from God, that he joined himself to them and received

[1] Wigram, *History of the Assyrian Church*, pp. 138, 158.
[2] Labourt, *Le Christianisme dans l'empire perse*, p. 127.
[3] Idem, p. 127.

the crown of martyrdom with them. The place of martyrdom and the memorial church are both still called, not by the name of any of the bishops who perished there, but by the name of this convert from the ranks of the persecutors who was baptized in his own blood. [1]

When John the metropolitan of Karka was being led to death, a youth urged him to be of good cheer. John turning to him declared that he was fit to be bishop in his room and stead, and there, in the prison or at the place of execution, this youth called Dindui was ordained metropolitan but exercised the office only for one or two days, when he too received the crown of martyrdom.

After the persecution had passed, the bishops of the two provinces gathered on the spot and 'decreed a solemn annual memorial to those who had perished there,' and to this day the Christians of Kirkuk gather at the little church on the red hillock on the 25th September (old style) in memory of those who sealed their testimony with their blood in the year A. D. 448.

Other martyrdoms took place but details exist only of a few of these, to wit the martyrdom of Pethiun, an evangelist in the region around the sources of the Lesser Zab. [2] He was the son of a wealthy Magian named Gushnap, who later became a Christian and received the name Dadishu. The brother of Gushnap, called

[1] Wigram, *History of the Assyrian Church*, p. 139.
[2] Bedjan, ii. p. 559.

Yazdian, was led to Christ by Jacob, a Christian dependant of the family. Jacob refused to baptize him when he applied for baptism, being afraid of his father. Yazdian accordingly left home and received baptism at the hands of the bishop of Karka d'Beit Sluk. After some years, he returned and found his brother a Christian and at the head of the family. The brother Dad Ishu, entrusted his son Pethiun to the care of his Rabban brother. When the great persecution took place Pethiun was put to death, not in Karka d'Beit Sluk but in the modern Sulimanthiah (ancient Kholwan), and with him, his disciple and companion in 'Rabbanship,' Anahid the beautiful daughter of the Mobed Adur-Hormizd, who, however, as was usual in the case of Rabbanyathi was offered life if 'she would marry as a woman ought.' [1] When she refused she was subjected to severe tortures.

Great as were the massacres in Persia proper they can scarcely have been greater than those inflicted on the Armenians during the same period, aggravated as the latter were by a rebellion on the part of the people against an attempt by Yezd'gerd to compel them to become Zoroastrians. Monks and nuns were as much the object of persecution as the clergy, partly because they were Christian leaders, partly on account of the horror with which the Zoroastrians regarded celibate life. Rabbanyathi were usually offered their life if they would consent to marry, in which case renunciation of Christianity was not always insisted on.

[1] Bedjan, ii. pp. 583, 603.

Monastic Bible Training Schools—A second and most effective agency in the spreading of the gospel, and a contributing factor to the missionary activity of the Nestorian church, was the monastic system, combined as it was with schools for the education of the children of the Christian community on the one hand, and for the training of the youth of the church, especially such of them as had devoted themselves to the ascetic life, on the other. The Monasteries were really what might be called Missionary Bible Training schools, the chief subject taught being the sacred scriptures.

This practice the Nestorians carried with them wherever they went. They introduced also letters and learning among peoples who were previously illiterate, such as Turks, Uigurs, Mongols, and Manchus, all of whom are said to have derived their alphabets from the Syriac.

Education, even to-day, is one of the things that appeals to the Nestorian more than money itself, and the excellence of their schools has always been a strong feature of their church life.[1]

During the persecution under Sapor, teachers were specially sought for, indicating that even in those days, i.e., the fourth century, there must have been at least elementary schools. For higher education, students had to cross the frontier and go to the school of Edessa, and when in A.D. 489 it was suppressed by the Monophysite party of Constantinople, Nisibis took its place.

[1] Wigram, *History of the Assyrian Church*, p. 238.

The Patriarch, Mar Babowai, A.D. 457–484 opened in Seleucia a school which later was transferred to Bagdad. Others are known to have existed at Dor Koni and Makhozi d'Arimu.[1] Amr, who lived about A.D. 1340, speaks of colleges for Tartars at Merv, and for Arabs at Hirta and Prat d'Maishan.[2] Every bishop maintained a school of greater or less importance, for the running of which the chorepiscopus was responsible. The course was mainly theological, the text book being the scriptures, and more particularly the Psalms. Many of the pupils knew the whole Psalter by heart and candidates for ordination were expected to be able to repeat the whole. The schools were primarily for Christians. For non-Christians there were government schools, but these were under Magian control. The Christian schools as a rule formed part of the monastery, the teachers being Rabbans or monks, and the pupils being under monastic rule. Education was free although parents were expected to contribute towards the support of the teachers, and during the long summer vacation the students were expected to maintain themselves by labour or in other ways. Begging, however, was not allowed, but the steward had a certain number of bursaries at his disposal. The students lived in groups of five or six in a cell. In Sabr Ishu's day the college at Nisibis had no less than eight hundred pupils. The

[1] Wigram, *History of the Assyrian Church*, p. 238.
[2] Assemani, Vol. III, ii. p. 932.

accommodation was humble and the fare meagre. Sabr Ishu is said to have partaken of a meal only once a week. The church services formed part of the course, and doubtless all the approved theological works of the church, of which there were quite a number, were to be found in the library of the monastery.

For information regarding the monastic system proper, we are indebted to Mar Thomas of Marga who gives a very full account of it in his *Historia Monastica* which dates from about the ninth century. It deals mainly, although not exclusively, with the Rabbans or monks and Abbots of Beth Abhe, with which Mar Thomas was himself directly connected. The trustworthiness of the record is evidenced by the fact that while praising the Rabbans and their profession of asceticism, Mar Thomas does not hesitate to point out what he considers their faults, as for example, in his account of the events which led to the expulsion of certain monks living in the outer cells of the monastery of Mount Izla who had married, contrary to the practice of the monastery. (There is no evidence to show that those who had married were an exception to the celibate rule, but rather that they were a survival of that class of married monks which was fast dying out under such zealous reformers as Babhai.)

According to Assemani, with a view to ensuring a sufficient supply of candidates male and female for monastic requirements, it was the duty of the bishop or presbyter when visiting the different congrega-

tions, to impress upon the parents the importance of encouraging their sons and daughters to devote themselves to the ascetic life, to distribute those offering themselves to the different monasteries, and to see that they were properly instructed in the work of the ministry.[1]

The Deaconesses were to be taught by understanding and honest teachers so that they might be thoroughly grounded in the scriptures, especially in the ministry of the Psalms. Where there was no teacher it was the duty of the chief Presbyter to see that one was appointed.

Those who wished to study medicine had to attend a hospital for the purpose.[2] The sons of Christians were expected to study the Psalms, the New Testament, and to attend courses of lectures, before entering on a business career.[3] Older members of the community were recommended to study such ascetic books as the book of Paradise, and the writings of Mar Abba, Mar Isaiah, Mar Sergius and other monastic fathers.

The monastery of Beth Abhe[4] with which the record of Mar Thomas is specially concerned, consisted of a church with a number of buildings round it, including rooms set apart for kitchen, and other domestic offices, the refectory, the brothers common room, the library and a room for entertaining

[1] Assemani, Vol. III, ii. p. 934.
[2] Idem, p. 939.
[3] Idem, p. 941.
[4] Wallis Budge, Introduction to Thomas of Marga's *Historia Monastica*, p. 47.

strangers. About A.D. 600 it lodged eighty men, but fifty years later the number had increased to 300, necessitating the rebuilding and extension of the church. The rebuilding was carried through with considerable difficulty owing to the exaction of the Muhammadan ruler of Baghdad who enforced a tax of 15,000 pieces of silver (= £375) on the monastery. The money required was miraculously provided and the building completed. The daily services were seven in number, the Rabbans seeking to imitate the Psalmist when he said, 'Seven times a day do I praise Thee because of Thy righteous judgments' (Ps. 119. 164).[1] The principal services were just before sunset, at dusk, at midnight, at day break, and in the morning. Extracts from the Old and New Testaments were read, collects said, and hymns, anthems and responses sung. A certain number of Psalms were sung each day, great attention being paid to the singing.

When Ishu Yahbh II, A.D. 650–660, was metropolitan of Arbel, he and Anan Isho of Beth Abhe re-arranged the canons of the Hudhra or service book, and instituted a cycle of services for every day in the year and also for special occasions. This arrangement is still observed.

In the early part of the eighth century Mar Babhai succeeded to the metropolitan see of Marga, and immediately set about improving the service of praise so that the same tunes might be sung in all the

[1] Wallis Budge, Introduction to Thomas of Marga's *Historia Monastica*, p. 55.

different churches and in the same way. He founded twenty-four schools where pupils were given musical instruction and taught to sing carefully and accurately. Every six months these schools were examined. This method of teaching became so famous that it was known as the musical system of Mar Babhai. All students aspiring to an ascetic vocation had to serve a probationary period of three years, and the voices chosen for the choir were usually the probationers connected with the monastery. There was a considerable library, containing not only Old and New Testaments, Psalters and service books of other kinds, but also translations from the Greek. The monastery of Beth Abhe was supported by endowments made by pious benefactors and not by collecting alms. Some of the Rabbans were related to noble Persian families, and probably handed over their lands or vineyards or cattle to the common fund. The monastery attained the zenith of its prosperity about the middle of the seventh century, but under the Muhammadans evil times ensued and it dwindled. Although an ancient monastery[1] might be left unmolested, the Muhammadans would not supply funds for its maintenance and taxed it heavily. Rabbans might be teachers before they became ascetics, as for example in the case of Mar John the second Abbot. He was a teacher for thirty years, a 'solitary' for another thirty, and then Abbot.[1] Monks or Rabbans were divided into two classes, viz., the

[1] Wallis Budge, Thomas of Marga's *Historia Monastica*, p. 80.

'solitaries' or anchorites who lived by themselves, and those who lived in communities.[1] These latter were again divided. Where a number of monks lived under one roof the place was called a 'cœnobium,' when they lived in a cluster of separate cells it was called a 'laura.' The monks in the laura joined the members of the cœnobium in church on Saturdays, Sundays and festivals.[1]

The starting place of Christian monasticism was in Egypt. One of the most noted of the early recluses there was Antony, who, as a young man of considerable wealth, gave up all to follow Christ.[2] He died in A.D. 356. The founding of the first cœnobium is attributed to Pachomius who lived during the persecution of Diocletian. His sister Mary was the founder of an order of deaconesses or Rabbanyathi.[3] Pachomius after his conversion spent his whole life till his death in A.D. 351 in founding monasteries, in confirming the brethren, healing the sick and working miracles.

In the monastery of Pachomius in the Thebaid, there were 1,400 monks, and in the one at Oxyrhnchus, where in recent years a large number of papyri have been found, there were 20,000 monks and 10,000 nuns.[4] Rufinus who visited Egypt about A.D. 372 said there were almost as many monks living in the desert as people in the towns. Would-

[1] O'Leary, *The Syriac Church and Fathers*, p. 65.
[2] Rainy, *Ancient Catholic Church*, p. 293.
[3] Wallis Budge, Thomas of Marga's *Historia Monastica*, Vol. II, p. 397.
[4] Idem, p. 123.

be monks had to spend some time as novices and their final admission into the monastery depended on their conduct during that period. They subjected themselves to severe penances, one of them, Simon Stylites, A.D. 413, going so far as to build his cell on a pillar said to be sixty feet high so as to be beyond the reach of visitors. The 'solitary' usually had his cell near running water. The ascetics lived on grass or fruits and ate neither bread nor meat. They drank no wine and at the outset might have neither hut nor house. During the persecution under Sapor, monks were put to death in large numbers.

Monasticism was introduced into Mesopotamia by Mar Awgin, also an Egyptian, who died in A.D. 362. When he came from Egypt he brought with him seventy monks. They settled first at Nisibis, but afterwards removed to mount Izla, where they lived in a cavern for thirty years. Soon their number increased to three hundred and fifty. During the reign of Sapor II, the king sent for Awgin and gave him a warrant with the king's seal which permitted the monks to build churches and monasteries wherever and whenever they pleased. A few days later seventy-two Rabbans, with two Rabbanyathi were blessed by Awgin, and each holding his cross in his hand, set out to found monasteries in any place to which divine grace might lead them. The names of the seventy-two may be found in Mar Thomas's account, with the names of the two noble women, Mart Thecla and

Stratonice, sisters of Awgin.[1] The names of some of the monasteries founded are also given.

In the fifth century the spread of the monastic system throughout Persia was very rapid and the number of monasteries founded was very great, so much so, that it is said that the country of the east was filled with monasteries and convents and habitations of monks seeking to spread abroad the knowledge of Christ as Saviour and King. A copy of the rules of the monastery at mount Izla laid down by Mar Abraham, the founder of it, has come down to us. In it he is careful to quote scripture for every statement made. Canon 1 emphasises the importance of tranquility and 1 Thess. iv. 11; 2 Thess. iii. 12 and Isaiah xxxii. 17 are referred to. The passage continues as follows: 'Therefore let us be constant in our cells in quietness, and let us flee from idleness which is a thing that causeth loss.'

Canon 2 deals with fasting; Canon 3 refers to prayer and reading of God's word, with copious scripture references.[2] The other Canons deal with such subjects as silence, meekness, gentle instead of angry speech, slander, church services, the three years probationary period, etc.

The strict ascetic slept very little.[3] Of one, Arsenius, it is said that 'on Saturday evening he used to turn his back on the sun setting in the

[1] Wallis Budge, Introduction to Thomas of Marga's *Historia Monastica*, p. 130.
[2] Idem, p. 135.
[3] Idem, p. 151.

west behind him, and stretching out his hands heavenward, he prayed until the sun rose in front of him when he refreshed his eyes with a little sleep. On the other nights of the week he slept standing.'

The power of weeping while praying was greatly coveted by the monks, and the fathers speak of it as a salutary influence. The Rabban was enjoined to read books diligently, but he was bound to pray always whether eating, drinking, journeying or working. Of Rabban Hormizd of the monastery of Sylvanus, who was martyred in the sixty-ninth year of Sapor, it is said that he fasted ten days at a time and during these periods never lay down to sleep, but prayed with tears the whole day and night watching vigilantly the while.[1] When sleep overcame him he leant against one of the walls of his cell and snatched just enough for his pressing bodily needs. Reference has been made to the fact that Rabban Babhai founded twenty-four schools for the teaching of music. Others state that he founded altogether sixty schools and had sixty disciples who were teachers. The names of many places where he established schools are given.[2] He also wrote many treatises and religious works.

There is much more that might be gleaned from the lives of the Rabbans of the province of Marga. Enough has been said, however, to give one some idea

[1] Wallis Budge, Introduction to Thomas of Marga's *Historia Monastica*, p. 159.
[2] Idem, Vol. II, p. 297.

of the kind of men they were and to indicate the nature of the propaganda carried on by them. From hundreds of monasteries all over Persia and in central and eastern Asia, there poured forth a constant stream of ascetics, men and women, who had completed their three years probationary training and now went forth in obedience to our Lord's command, seeking to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth or to found new monasteries which in turn would be training schools for future generations of devotees. Some of them became 'solitaries' or 'anchorites,' giving themselves over mostly to prayer and intercession. Others remained for a time in the 'cœnobium' or 'laura' of the monastery continuing their studies, or training those who flocked to them for instruction. Others taking their lives in their hands went forth not knowing whither they went, but content to follow where God might lead. They were men of great faith, mighty in the scriptures, large portions of which they knew by heart fervent in prayer, gentle and humble in manner, and full of love to God on the one hand, and love to their neighbour and all mankind on the other—that love which 'beareth all things.' Supporting themselves by the labour of their hands or subsisting on roots and fruits or on the grass of the field, they counted no trouble too great, no hardship too severe so long as they might share in the spreading abroad of the message of full salvation for all mankind. They followed in the footsteps of Him who for their sakes 'endured the cross despising the shame.' They

'held their lives cheap and did not shrink even from death' (Rev. xii. 11. Weymouth), and like those who 'saw the king invisible and never flinched' (Heb. xi. 27. Moffatt) 'dared beyond their strength, ventured beyond their judgment and in the utmost extremity were of unquenchable hope.' Such were the men who went forth with 'feverish activity'[1] to carry the gospel to those who knew it not.

Nowhere in the history of the Christian church is there any body of men and women to whom may more fittingly be applied the words of Hebrews ii. 33–38: 'who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, women received their dead raised to life again; and others were tortured not accepting deliverance that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea of bonds and imprisonment; they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins being destitute, afflicted, tormented . . . . they wandered in deserts and mountains and in dens and caves of the earth.'

This description is borne out in the fuller account of the *Acts of the Martyrs* as given by Labourt or Bedjan, to which only a very brief reference is made in the first part of this chapter, and in the latter half

[1] Vambéry, *History of Bokhara*, p. 16.

of Volume II of the translation by Wallis Budge of Thomas of Marga's *Historia Monastica*.

These are the men whom the arrogance of Rome has branded as heretics all down the centuries. Would to God that the churches and missions of to-day might be inoculated with the same brand of heresy if it but led to such a mighty work of grace as was wrought through these missionaries of the 'Church of the East,' the Nestorian Church of the sixth, seventh and subsequent centuries of the Christian era!

Note: The nearest parallel to the monastic system in Syria and Persia is that of the Scoto-Irish Culdee Church. As regards the latter we are told that in the sixth century monasticism spread to the church in Ireland which became wholly monastic.[1] In Latin countries there was sometimes rivalry, sometimes alliance between the clerics and the monks, but in the church of the Scots in Ireland rivalry and alliance were alike impossible. The monks were clergy and all the clergy were monks. Scoto-Irish monastic life had little resemblance to the monasticism of St. Basil and St. Martin, nor was it introduced from the British church of Wales as is sometimes claimed. It was more akin to that of Egypt and Syria. 'Identification with the whole life of the church was an essential of the monasticism of the Scots. It was at the same time a healthy spiritual movement, a period marked by intelligent and devout enthusiasm and great missionary activity. The church flourished and brought forth fruit abundantly. In the monasteries of Ireland, the home of the Scots, Christian minds occupied themselves with sacred learning and a standard of education was reached which surpassed that of Rome itself. The culture and attainments of those monastic settlements is quite outside the region of legend. Many of them were founded during the early part of the sixth century—Clonard in A.D. 520, Moville A.D. 540, Clonmacnoire in A.D. 541 or A.D. 544, Clonfert A.D. 556, Bangor A.D. 554.'

'These were notable and productive centres of scholarship, the centre of interest being the study and transcribing of scriptures.' The smallest of them had usually fifty scholars each and the largest, Clonard, had as many as 3,000.

They were 'springs or fountains of an eager and exuberant missionary activity.' 'Through them the influence of Scotic Christianity permeated many pagan districts of western Europe and converted tribes which were untouched by the contemporary propagandism of Rome. They went forth in bands of twelve under an abbot. Of one such band under Columbanus we are told that they 'settled in

1 MacEwen, *History of the Church in Scotland*, Vol. I, pp. 39-43.

Burgundy at a time when savage license flourished there underthe misgovernment of the sons of Clovis.' They 'made their home in a wild forest amidst a population only nominally Christian.' Their rule was far sterner than that of St. Benedict. The fare was meagre; unquestioning obedience was imperative and flogging was inflicted for the slightest reach of discipline.' Such was the type of missionary produced by these wonderful monastic missionary schools in the sixth and seventh centuries in Ireland and Scotland. Very similar must they have been to the missionaries in Persia described by Thomas of Marga.

Principal Rainy in his *Ancient Catholic Church* in the chapter on monasticism says:

'The ascetic life as placed under rule in the monastery was accepted and accredited by the church and both as a fact and as a force it became an element of first rate importance in practical Christianity. It agreed with the asceticism of Antony and his followers in prescribing the sacrifice of all positions. . . . It added to mere asceticism the advantage of rules and especially it restored something of the social tie.'[1]

Its significance lay after all in this 'It embodied an effort to give effect to one of the most fundamental rules of Christianity. Genuine Christianity includes the surrender to a new principle, the recognition of a new master, the response to a new motive and the acceptance of all sacrifice which so great a change implies.' An effort in favour of a more thorough and strenuous Christianity was the spring of the movement.'

1 Rainy, *Ancient Catholic Church*, pp. 299-301.

CHAPTER III

NESTORIANISM IN ARABIA

It has already been pointed out that one of the places to which refugees fled in seeking to escape from the persecutions in Persia was the peninsula of Arabia with its separate independent kingdoms. Along with these was the semi-independent Arab state of Hirtha in southern Mesopotamia, which lay on the direct route from Persia to South Arabia and served at least as a resting place for those proceeding further.

Northern Arabia doubtless shared with the south in the exodus that took place, but it is with the south and the centre that we are chiefly concerned, as being the part that looked upon the 'Church of the East' as its mother church and the patriarch of Seleucia as its ecclesiastical head. The individual kingdoms referred to are those of Najran and Yemen, the latter including also the provinces of Hadramaut and Oman. These countries were very fertile and had a salubrious climate. In the centre of the peninsula is the table land of Nejd with an average elevation of 3000 feet. Nejd is the headquarters of the puritanical Wahabi sect, the head of which, Ibn Saud, is now the king of the Hedjaz.

From Nejd there is a gradual ascent towards the south and south east, until in the highlands of Yemen and Oman we reach mountain peaks of from

8000 to 10,000 feet high.[1] The temperature even in July seldom rises above 85°, and at San'ā, the capital of Yemen, there is frost for three months in the year.

One of the characteristics of Arabia is its wadys. These, although dry in summer, are full to almost overflow in winter, and water can always be found by digging in the wady bed. With such a refuge within reach, it would have been strange if it had not been taken advantage of. According to Sale,[2] this is what actually happened, but he makes the mistake of thinking that the refugees were mostly Jacobites, overlooking the fact that Jacobitism was unknown in Persia at the time of the persecutions there.

In fleeing from Persia they would either go by sea, to the coasts of Oman and Hadramaut, or travel by land by way of Hira or Hirtha (modern El Hasa). There was fairly constant intercourse between Yemen and Hirtha, and via Hirtha, with Persia, as may be gathered from references in the *Book of the Himyarites* and other books mentioned there. Hayyan, referred to later, who is credited with having been the first to carry the gospel to Najran, is mentioned as having gone from Najran to Persia via Hirtha,[3] and in another place, reference is made to an incident that happened at a much later date, when Jacobites from Hirtha fled to Najran. Further, among the martyrdoms that took place at Najran were not only presbyters from Hirtha, but two Greeks and a presbyter from Persia.

[1] Zwemer, *Arabia the Cradle of Islam*, pp. 19–20.
[2] Sale, *The Koran*, p. 17.
[3] Moberg, *The Book of the Himyarites*, p. lxi.

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[1] Zwemer, *Arabia the Cradle of Islam*, pp. 19–20.
[2] Sale, *The Koran*, p. 17.
[3] Moberg, *The Book of the Himyarites*, p. lxi.

Tonuch, part of the tribes of Tay and Kodaa, the Arabs of Hirtha, and the inhabitants of Nejd.[1] (Nejd was the Arabia of the poets, of whom some were Christian.) Zwemer adds the Beni Harith of Najran and other tribes between Medina and Kufa.

An Arabian queen, Mavia by name, is said to have been a Christian and to have invited a bishop named Moses to live among her people. There were Christians at Hirtha and Kufa as early as A.D. 380. One of the early converts, Noman Abu Kamas, is said to have proved the sincerity of his faith by melting down a golden statue of the Arabian Venus worshipped by his tribes, and to have distributed the proceeds to the poor.[2] Many of his people, following his example, broke their idols and were baptized.

Probably the most authentic, as it is one of the most recent authorities regarding Christianity in central and south Arabia, is *The Book of the Himyarites* made up of fragments of a hitherto unknown Syriac work; edited with introduction and translation by Axel Moberg, and published at Lund, Sweden, in 1924. It deals chiefly with the persecutions in Najran and Yemen in the first quarter of the sixth century but makes important references to other places and events as well. It is written in old Jacobite script and the date of writing is given as A.D. 932, but the date of the original,

[1] Sale, *The Koran*, p. 17.
[2] Zwemer, *Islam*, pp. 18, 19.

which it reproduces as arrived at by internal evidence, is found to be A.D. 525, the year of the second Abyssinian expedition against the Himyarites, or very soon after.[1] It is here that we find the account of the first introduction of Christianity into Najran, quoted by Moberg from an ancient Nestorian chronicle. We are told that in the land of Najran or Yemen, in the days of Yezd'gerd, there was a well known tradesman called Hayyan.[2] He had been to Constantinople on business. When he returned he determined to visit Persia, and set out, going *via* Hirtha. While in Hirtha he frequented the company of Christians and learned their doctrines. He was baptized and continued with them for some time. When he returned to Najran, he urged his fellow countrymen to adopt his faith, and his family and a number of people in that part of the country became Christians and were baptized. Some of them attached themselves to him, and helped to Christianize not only the Himyarites (Najranites) but the people in the adjacent tracts of Abyssinia. The date when this took place is said to have been during the reign of Yezd'gerd I (A.D. 399-420).

Al-Mundhar, king of the Arabs of Hirtha, became a Christian, we are told, in A.D. 512, and was baptized by Simon, metropolitan of Hirtha. Henda, a sister of Mundhar, was baptized at the same time and founded a coenobium in which she lived a

[1] Moberg, *The Book of the Himyarites*, p. xl and lviii ff.
[2] Idem, p. xlix.

monastic life. The metropolitan of Hirtha was subject to the Patriarch of Seleucia, as were also the episcopates of Kufa, Beth Raman, Bassora and Perath Messenes.[1]

So far as we know, up to this time there does not seem to have been anything in the nature of a general persecution of the Christians of Najran and Yemen, although there is a reference to the martyrdom of one Azquir, A.D. 467, in the reign of one Sharakbial Yakkuf (a reference too vague to form the basis of any conclusion). The relations between Jews—of whom there were considerable numbers scattered all over Arabia—and Christians must have frequently been very strained. In the year A.D. 523, however, a violent persecution of Christians broke out. The prime mover in it was Dhu Namas, or Dunaas, the Jewish king of the Himyarites. The name by which he is generally called is Masruq.[2] Probably both are correct, Dhu Numas being a sort of surname, and Masruq the personal name. Several apparently conflicting statements are made about him. He is said to have been the son of a Jewish mother, whose faith he followed, and to have succeeded his father as King of the Himyarites. But in another place we read of a delegation of Christian Himyarites who were staying in Hirtha, having been sent thither by the Christian king of the Himyarites whose death, just then, gave Masruq the opportunity of usurping power, which he did. This statement requires

[1] Assemani, III, ii, p. 599 ff.
[2] Moberg, *The Book of the Himyarites*, p. lxxii.

reconciliation, for if he succeeded his father on the throne wherein lay his necessity for forcibly usurping power? One of his predecessors is referred to as Ma'dikarim who was king before him and to whom, when he was in straits, the Martyr Ruhm had lent 12,000 dinars. Was Ma'dikarim the father of Masruq? He may have been, and it is equally probable that there is no real contradiction in the apparently contradictory statements but that two different kings and two distinct countries are referred to—those of Najran and Yemen. In Najran, which was ruled over by a Christian king, the Christians were in the ascendancy. In Yemen the Jews apparently predominated and the king was either a pagan or a Jew. There is no evidence to show whether Masruq's father was a Jew or not, although sufficient data is available to enable one to prove that his mother was a Jewess.

The date of the persecution initiated by Masruq was A.D. 523, but from the titles of some of the chapters, which are missing in the *Book of Himyarites* (the titles as given in the table of contents alone remaining), it is learnt that even prior to that date there had been a certain amount of persecution, and the assumption that this persecution was due to Jewish influence is doubtless correct. Not that the others were necessarily blameless. We find for example a martyr in one of the martyrologies glorying in the fact that her father had set fire to one of the Jewish synagogues, so that there may very likely have been some provocation.

Be that as it may, there was persecution of some sort which led to the sending by the Christians of an appeal for help to Elesbaan, otherwise called Kaleb, king of the Abyssinians. He responded by sending what is known as the first Abyssinian expedition against the Himyarites.[1] That was in A.D. 519. The Jews were defeated and the Jewish king took refuge in the mountains. After the main body of the Abyssinians had returned to their own country the conflict seems to have been renewed, the leader of the Christians being, as before, the king of Najran, while the leader on the other side was Masruq king of Yemen. It was apparently at that time that the delegation, already referred to, was dispatched to the king of Hirtha, probably for the purpose of forming an alliance or of obtaining help from that quarter. The death of the king of Najran soon after gave Masruq the opportunity of, at least, attempting to annex Najran to his own dominions. The withdrawal of the Abyssinians made this practicable. He, therefore, usurped the control of Najran and set about subjugating the province.

The Abyssinians had apparently left a garrison, consisting of five hundred and eighty men, in the town of Zafar (or Dhafar); or it may be that they intended to retain possession of Zafar and accordingly kept a garrison permanently there. From the fact that Zafar had at least one church, it is evident that it contained a number of Christians. Possibly it was largely Christian.

[1] Moberg, *The Book of the Himyarites*, p. xxvii.

The first task confronting Masruq, therefore, was the subjugation of Zafar and the expulsion, or destruction, of the garrison. He seems to have failed in his first attempt to capture the town, and recognizing that he could not accomplish this by force he determined to do it by guile. He accordingly sent messengers, consisting of Jewish priests who had come from Tiberias, accompanied by one man belonging to the town itself, and another from Hirtha both of whom are spoken of as 'Christians in name' only.[1] They carried a letter from Masruq in which he pledged himself by the most solemn and terrible oaths that if they would but come out to him willingly and surrender the town no harm would befall them and he would send them back to their king and country in peace.

When the Abyssinians received Masruq's letter, confirmed, as it was, by the messengers who brought it, they believed his words and the general and three hundred of his men left the city and went out to where he was. He dissembled before them, but secretly commanded the Jews who were with him to slay every one of them during the night and to cast their bodies in a certain place. This having been done he sent men to take the town. They entered and finding the remaining two hundred and eighty Abyssinians gathered together in the church, set the building on fire and burnt to death all who were in it.

Masruq now determined to exterminate the

[1] Moberg, *The Book of the Himyarites*, p. cv.

Christians throughout his dominions and sent messengers, with letters, to all the provinces of the Himyarites, giving instructions that all Christians should either deny Christ and become Jews or be put to death, and that anyone found concealing a Christian should have his house burnt to the ground and all his property destroyed. And thus the sword was unsheathed throughout the whole land of the Himyarites.

Masruq next turned his attention to the town of Najran, the capital of the country. He accordingly devised a scheme whereby he might get the place into his power.[1] To begin with, he wrote a letter to one Harith, a Christian of Najran, evidently either the governor or the leading man in the town. Giving as an excuse that war was about to break out and their services were urgently required, he instructed Harith to gather together all the Christian men of the town and send them to him leaving not one behind. Harith gathered the men together and spoke with them as Masruq had commanded. In the innocence of their hearts they believed his words and set out for the camp of Masruq. Fortunately before they reached the place they heard of his treachery, and what he had done to the men of Zafar. They immediately turned back and returned whence they had come.

Masruq having failed in this attempt sent his armies to besiege Najran, but for some time they met with little success and suffered heavy loss. Hearing

[1] Moberg, *The Book of the Himyarites*, p. cvi.

this, Masruq himself went to the place and took over the command. He suffered an even greater defeat than his generals, and resolved to accomplish by craft what he had failed to do by force. He accordingly sent a letter to the Najranites in which he made many promises, and assured them that, if they would but submit themselves to him justice would be done. Afraid lest the town might not be able to hold out much longer, and deceived by his promises, there went out to him notables of the town to the number of one hundred and fifty. Masruq received them kindly, and the first day showed no perfidy but commanded that each of them should send and bring to him all the silver and gold that they had in their possession, promising that the rest of their property should remain theirs, but 'woe to anyone who attempted to keep anything back.' In this too they did as he commanded. After further demands and some delay he ordered a cross to be brought and thrown on the ground in front of him. Then addressing those who had come out to him he commanded them to deny Christ, the Son of Mary, to spit on His cross, and to become Jews, and their lives would be spared; otherwise he would cause them to suffer torments by fire, and their lives would be consumed. They not only refused to obey his behest in this matter but affirmed anew their faith in Christ 'who had saved them from the second death which' said they, addressing Masruq, 'is reserved for you that you may die for ever by it together with Satan your father.' 'Therefore, as thou hast seen

our faith do all that you wish and do not delay us from our way to the Lord.'[1]

Masruq, however, had privately learned that some subjects of foreign countries were among the 'blessed ones' who were before him, and he delayed taking action until he had satisfied himself regarding them. He enquired from each particulars as to name, status and country of origin. In this way he learned that the presbyters Moses and Eliya were from Hirtha, the presbyter Sergios and the deacon Hananya Romans (or Greeks), the presbyter Abraham a Persian and the deacon Jonan an Abyssinian. Repeating what he had already said he threatened them saying, 'If you will not deny Christ and say that He is not God but a man you will suffer with others.' The presbyter Moses answered, 'I will not deny Christ but confess Him that He is God, the Son of God, indeed.' As the others approved, Masruq was exceedingly angry and sentenced them all to be put to death. Another account adds the information (*a*) that an immense pyre was prepared, apparently in the church itself, on which the presbyters and other members of the clergy of the town, described as the pure brethren of the holy order, to the number of four hundred and twenty-seven were burnt, and (*b*) that the notables with Arethas (or Harith) at their head were imprisoned and commanded to deny their faith, and when they refused to do so they too were put to death, evidently at the same time and place. Fresh fuel was added

[1] Moberg, *The Book of the Himyarites*, p. cix.

to the fire before the latter were thrown to the flames.[1]

The account in the *Book of Himyarites* gives further details and tells how the remainder of the men believers at Najran were put to death on one day, the freeborn women and their young children on another day, and again another company of freeborn women on a third day, besides numbers of individual men and women who suffered at different times. A similar persecution took place also it is said at the town of Hadramaut when the church there was also used as a pyre.[2] There is, however, no evidence of there being a town of that name. The chief town of the province of Hadramaut was Sabota (Shabwa).[3] The ruins of a Himyarite town have been discovered at Shabwa, but there is nothing to prove that this town and Hadramaut are one and the same. Moberg thinks that possibly a Syrian author had heard of a town in Hadramaut which suffered during the persecutions by Masruq but had forgotten the name. As regards the town of Najran the major part of the persecutions there seem to have taken place in the short period of a week—November 20–28. A.D. 523, during which time Masruq appears to have been in camp in the neighbourhood of the town.[4]

Muhammadan historians give two somewhat different versions of the outbreak of the persecution, In one the king, whose capital was San'ā, marched with his army against Najran and called upon the

[1] Moberg, *The Book of the Himyarites*, p. xxviii.
[2] Idem, p. ciii. [3] Idem, p. liii. [4] Idem, p. lviii.

inhabitants to accept Judaism. When they refused he dug a trench and slew them with the sword and burnt them to the number of 20,000. Another version adds the information that the attack on Najran was not merely out of zeal for Judaism but to avenge an outrage, by Christians, on a Jew. One writer is of opinion that the Muhammadans did not have first-hand information, but that they only learned about the persecution in Najran from Najranites who were exiled to Iraq in the days of Khalif Omar.[1]

The constancy and steadfastness of the martyrs under trial, subjected as they were to tortures of various kinds, was such that even Masruq wondered.

One of the first to suffer was a native of Najran who was met on the road by some of Masruq's myrmidons.[2] 'Are you a Christian?' he was asked. 'Yes I am a Christian, he replied.' 'Then hold up your right hand.' He held it up and at once it was cut off. 'Are you a Christian?' again he was asked. 'Yes.' 'Then hold up your left hand.' It too was immediately cut off. 'Are you still a Christian?' they asked. 'Yes,' he replied, 'in life and death I am a Christian.' Enraged at this obstinacy they cut off both his feet and thus he died.

When the women of Najran whose husbands had been slain the previous day were brought before Dhu Yazan, Masruq's general and co-persecutor, and commanded to deny Christ as otherwise they would be put to death as had been their husbands,

[1] Moberg, *The Book of the Himyarites*, p. lxii. [2] Idem, p. cvi.

they answered : ' God forbid that we should deny our Lord and our God Jesus Christ, for He is God and the maker of all things and He has saved us from eternal death ; and God forbid that we should spit on His cross or that we should treat it with contempt, for by it He has prepared for us redemption from all errors ; and we abjure thy king and thyself and all who agree with you, ye Jews crucifiers of our Lord ; and we pray that as our husbands died we may be deemed worthy to die, we also, for the sake of Christ, God.' [1]

A woman called Habsa, grieving that she was not amongst the number of those who were first arrested, prayed and said, ' Our Lord Jesus Christ regard not my sins and exclude me not from the rank of martyrdom for Thy sake, but deem me worthy my Lord, me also, to be added to the number of those who have loved Thee and been put to death for the sake of Thy worshipped name.' [2] When, later, she was brought before Masruq and was asked who she was, she answered 'I am the daughter of Hayyan, of the family of Hayyan, the teacher, him by whom our Lord sowed Christianity in our land. But Hayyan my father once burned your synagogues.' She and two others with her were then tied as camels are tied and beaten almost to death with rods ; they were then tied to wild camels and sent forth into the desert. Thus they yielded up their spirits to their Lord and were crowned by this glorious confession.

[1] Moberg, *The Book of the Himyarites*, p. cxviii. [2] Idem, p. cxii.

Many other similar cases could be mentioned. While the persecution was still going on, the Christians prepared a petition and sent it by the hands of a Himyarite Christian named Umayyah to the holy bishop Euprepios and to 'Kaleb the believing king of Abyssinia' telling them what Masruq 'the crucifier' had done to the Christians.[1] Immediately king Kaleb, *alias* Elesbaan, sent an army against Masruq. By an artifice the latter seems to have inflicted a defeat on those who first landed, but a fresh army under two generals was despatched. A decisive battle was fought, apparently on the shores or in the neighbourhood of the Red Sea. The forces of Masruq were completely defeated and Masruq threw himself into the sea and was drowned.

King Elesbaan, described as 'the Christ-loving king Kaleb,' remained in the land of the Himyarites for seven months, during which time his soldiers roamed the country and did whatever they pleased. The Jews especially suffered much at their hands. The Christians also suffered to some extent as, owing to their ignorance of each other's language, they were not able to say to the Abyssinians, 'We are Christians.'[2] Finally, however, they adopted the artifice of tattooing on their hands the sign of the cross. When the Abyssinians saw this sign on their hands they did them no harm.

King Kaleb, before his departure, took one of the Himyarite nobles who was of royal blood and per-

[1] Moberg, *The Book of the Himyarites*, p. civ. [2] Idem, p. cxl.

ceiving in him good will towards faith and knowing that he had greatly desired for a long time to be baptized and be a Christian, he instructed the priests to baptize him, he himself acting as sponsor. Then looking upon him as his spiritual son, he appointed him king over all the land of the Himyarites.

Prior to the persecution, there were probably churches, not only in Najran and Zafar, but in Marib and Hajaren and other places where there were Christians.[1]

During the persecution most of these must have been destroyed, but under the Abyssinian regime they were rebuilt and Christianity apparently emerged from the crisis stronger and with a larger community than ever.

It has been thought that the king appointed by Elesbaan was Abraha Ashram, famous in Arabian history for his unsuccessful attack on Mecca shortly before Muhammad was born. He was also supposed to be one of the two generals sent with the second Abyssinian expedition. This, however, is obviously not the case for the following reasons. Firstly—the narrative just referred to tells us that the king appointed by Elesbaan was one of the Himyarite nobles and that he was connected with the Himyarite royal house, while the generals in charge of the troops were almost certainly not only Abyssinians but already Christians when they landed. Secondly—the date of Abraha's unsuccessful attack on Mecca is given as A.D. 568, while the date of the Abyssinian

[1] Moberg, *The Book of the Himyarites*, p. lii.

expedition was A.D. 525, a difference of forty-three years. Thirdly—the name of the king appointed is given in the *Book of the Himyarites*. It is unfortunately partly illegible, but enough remains to show conclusively that it is not Abraha whatever it may have been.

As already indicated, it is not till more than forty years after king Elesbaan's visit that Abraha first appears on the scene. The king reigning in Sanā in the year mentioned is called by that name, and the word Ashram (or split-nosed) is added. Nothing is said as to where he came from, but the probability is that he was either the successor of the king appointed in A.D. 525 or in the direct line of succession.

'In the year A.D. 567' we read, 'Abraha the Christian king of Yemen built a new cathedral at Sanā with the intention of making it the rival of Mecca for the Arab pilgrimage.' [1] On the very night prior to its intended dedication, the church was defiled by pagan Arabs from the north, supposed to be members of the Meccan tribe of Koreish. Then followed the famous expedition of Abraha against Mecca and his defeat by the Koreish, for ever celebrated in chapter CV of the Koran on the elephant. A more detailed account of the incident is to be found in Zwemer's *Arabia the Cradle of Islam* (p. 308), but the year mentioned there is A.D. 568.

Three years after Abraha's unsuccessful attempt there was born in Mecca one destined to change the

[1] Zwemer's *Islam*, p. 20.

whole history, not only of Arabia but of a considerable part of the continent of Asia—Muhammad the prophet of Islam. There is not a very connected account of events in Arabia from the birth of Muhammad until the date of the Hegira. The Jewish element in Yemen would doubtless continue to be a source of potential trouble. But under the aegis of the Abyssinians the Christian dynasty represented by Abraha and his son Yeksonin, who succeeded him, continued to exist. The manner in which it was finally overthrown and the way prepared for the advent of Muhammad is told in the 'annales' of Tabari referred to by Moberg. One of the persons prominent in the persecution of A.D. 523 was Dhu Yazan, Masruq's willing servant and companion in wickedness. What happened to him after the arrival of the Abyssinians is not narrated, but in the 'annales' there is a reference to a certain Saif C. Dhu Yazan, perhaps his son or at least a member of the same family, who helped to bring about the expulsion of the Abyssinians. He left his own country, went to Hirtha, and was introduced by the king of Hirtha to the Persian court. He succeeded in persuading the Persians to send an army under one of their generals against the Abyssinians in Yemen. With the help of the Persians the Abyssinians were driven out. The Jews probably regained a certain amount of ascendancy in Yemen, but the Christians evidently continued to be in the majority in Najran. Neither party, however, was strong enough to gather around it the elements making for national

well-being. Zwemer says: 'The defeat of the Yemen hosts brought anarchy to the whole of central Arabia. The idolators of the north overran the south, and the weak reign of Yeksonin could not stay the decay of Christianity.'[1] The country was ripe for a great national movement which would be entirely independent of foreign control, whether Abyssinian or Persian. All that was needed was a leader who would be able to bring about a fusion of the different national parties and lead the way in the formation of a homogeneous state. The rise of Muhammad furnished the leader required and coincided with a great national opportunity.

It may appear at first sight that all this has nothing to do with Nestorianism. This premise, however, would be incorrect, as this aspect of the question has a close connection with the subject, inasmuch as prior to A.D. 547, when the great Jacobite revival began, the only form of Christian faith known in the whole of independent Arabia and Hirtha was that held by the 'Church of the East' the so-called Nestorians, and it is practically certain that every presbyter and bishop in the whole of that area recognized and acknowledged allegiance to the Patriarch of Seleucia. When, therefore, mention is found of Christians in Mecca and Medina and even in the tribe of Koreish, one is warranted in assuming that all such, prior to at least, the middle of the sixth century, were in communion with the same patriar

[1] Moberg, *The Book of the Himyarites*, p. lxx.
[2] Zwemer, *Arabia the Cradle of Islam*, p. 313.

chate. When the sudden rise of Islam took place it was the Nestorians who suffered most from the impact.

Muhammad was born in A.D. 570 or A.D. 571, but the Muhammadan era dates only from A.D. 622. He claimed to have received his call to the prophetic office when in retirement in the cave of Hira, about ten or twelve years prior to A.D. 622, and immediately began to preach the new religion and to receive revelations which later went to form the *Koran*, the sacred Book of the Muhammadans. In the preparation of the *Koran* he is said to have made use not only of Nestorians, but of Jacobites and Jews. One of those who assisted him was a Nestorian or Jacobite monk named Sergius, surnamed Bahira, the experienced.[1] Whether Sergius and Bahira were two different persons as maintained by Hoffman, or one and the same as claimed by Nau, is immaterial.[2]

Muhammad tried to persuade the people of Mecca to acknowledge his claims and to accept his leadership but without success, and he had to flee to Medina where he found a more responsive hearing. Some of the Arabs there were ready to acknowledge his prophetic claims and to follow him in the new religious and national movement which he was endeavouring to bring about. Whether, prior to his flight to Medina, Muhammad had intended to make his religious teaching the central feature of his propaganda or not is not known. It is certain, however,

[1] Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, Vol. III, ii, p. 609.
[2] Nau, *L'expansion nestorienne en asie*, pp. 214–5.

that from that time forward schemes for temporal power occupied an important part in it.

He was hostile to the Jews but friendly to Christians. There is no information as to whether this was on account of a policy or as the result of conviction. The defeat of the Yemen *cum* Abyssinian hosts by the Persians had on the one hand so weakened the Christian forces, and on the other hand so encouraged the Jews, that it is easily understood how ready the former would be to enter into an alliance which promised to be to their advantage and which would enable them to withstand more easily the aggression of their old opponents. Muhammad stood to benefit by any such arrangement. It was largely due to the help afforded by various Christian communities that he secured the submission of non-Christian tribes in other parts of Arabia. This was equally true of his immediate successor, Abu Bekr the first Khalif (A.D. 632–634). Among the people who came to the assistance of Mothanna, one of Abu Bekr's generals, in a critical engagement with the Persians two years after Muhammad's death, was the Beni Namr, a Christian tribe from the north. It was chiefly owing to the valour of the Beni Namr contingent that victory was secured, and the most gallant feat of the day's fighting was performed by a man belonging to another Christian tribe, the Beni Taghlib. [1]

Notwithstanding the help thus given and received, it is quite possible that even in the early days of the

[1] Muir, *Annals of Early Caliphate*, p. 137.

new era, Muhammad intended to make Islam predominant in the whole of Arabia. Even Christian tribes were to be permitted to continue only on sufferance and subject to the payment of an annual tribute. 'Throughout the peninsula there shall be no second creed' was, it is said, his dying command. Whether he actually said so or not is unknown, but his successors certainly acted on that principle and no matter how willing they might have been to benefit by the help of Christians in times of need the objective referred to was ever kept before them. How it worked out in actual practice may be seen from two examples.

(1) In one of their battles the defeated force fled to the island of Darin in the Persian Gulf. Darin was the seat of a Nestorian bishop and the inhabitants must have been largely Christian.[1] The Muhammadans succeeded in crossing to the island and put the male inhabitants to the sword so that not one escaped to tell the tale. 'The spoil was prodigious and multitudes of women and children were taken captive.'

(2) The second instance is of a different kind. Reference has been frequently made to Najran, the capital of which, called by the same name, suffered so heavily in the persecution by Masruq. The inhabitants of Najran were almost entirely Christian. Muhammad had entered into an agreement with them whereby in return for an annual tribute they were to be permitted to continue in undisturbed observance

[1] Muir, *Annals of Early Caliphate*, p. 51.

of their ancestral faith. When, however, Omar succeeded Abu Bekr in the Khalifate, he deported all the Christian Najranites, who still refused to embrace Islam to Iraq.[1] The name Najran of al-Kufa is believed to commemorate this deportation. Later, in A.D. 864 and A.D. 935, when reference is made to bishops of Najran it is these al-Kufa Najranites who are referred to.[2]

Even earlier than this, however, Muhammad had sent Ali into Yemen to propagate the Muhammadan faith. He is said to have converted the whole tribe of Hamdan (probably non-Christian) in one day, and it is stated that their example was quickly followed by all the other inhabitants of the province with the exception of the Najranites referred to above, who being Christians chose rather to pay tribute. Najran is here spoken of, as it sometimes was, as a part of Yemen.

Conversions from Christianity to Islam in large numbers are reported as having taken place in Bahrein, in Mazoum or Oman, in Fars, in the south west, and also in the centre of Arabia. The reason for the apostacy of many was the hope of saving their property. 'Where is the great people of the Mazonites' (Mazoun was the name given especially to Sohar but in general to all the region of Oman) 'which has precipitated itself into the great gulf of apostacy for the love of half its goods?[3]' 'Where are the sanctuaries of Karmania and of Fars?' wrote the Nestorian patriarch about A.D. 650.

[1] Moberg, *The Book of the Himyarites*, liv.
[2] Muir, *Annals of Early Caliphate*, p. 223.
[3] Nau, *L'expansion nestorienne en asie*, p. 232.

Ali, the fourth Khalif, A.D. 656–661, tried persuasive tactics, but when these proved ineffectual he also resorted to force. Muhammadanism was considered the national religion and obligatory for all Arabs.

That worldly motives played an important part in the early conversions to Islam is admitted even by Muhammadan historians. 'When for example the Arabs of the pathless desert, "fed on locusts and wild honey," once tasted the delicacies of civilization and revelled in the luxurious palaces of the Khosroes they said, "By Allah, even if we cared not to fight for the cause of God we could not but wish to contend for and enjoy *these*, leaving distress and hunger henceforth to others".'[1]

The prospect of plunder and rapine appealed to the non-Christian Bedouin tribes and led them to enlist *en masse* under the banner of Islam, and so far as the gospel message was concerned Arabia became, and has practically continued to be, a closed land.

Wright, quoted by Zwemer, makes the statement that 'with the death of Muhammad the last sparks of Christianity in Arabia were extinguished.' This, as proved by what has just been said, is obviously incorrect but there is no doubt that as a living force Christianity in Arabia had ceased to operate by the end of the seventh century.

Note: One of the great synods of the Nestorian church was held in South East Arabia as late as A.D. 676, under the presidency of Patriarch George (A.D. 660–680).[2]

[1] Zwemer's *Islam*, p. 57.

[2] *The Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. X. 2, p. 439.

CHAPTER IV

EXPANSION IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN ASIA

Even more important than the spread of Christianity in Arabia is the missionary expansion of the 'Church of the East' in central and eastern Asia. The pioneers in this also were again Nestorian artisans who went thither for the purpose of trade, or found employment, among people less advanced educationally, and in the service of kings, princes, and noblemen in the further provinces of Persia and beyond.

The golden age of Nestorian missions in central Asia was from the end of the fourth till about the end of the ninth centuries. In the Mongolian, Chinese and southern Siberian area, the period of greatest activity began later and continued well into the thirteenth century. It is during this period that we find the account of the conversion of the Keraites and the story of Prester John. To it also belong the Christian tombstones discovered near Lake Issykkul, to all of which reference will be made later.

'Eastward from the great school of Edessa' and from the monasteries and missionary schools of Persia, especially those in the province of Adiabene, 'the envoys of Christianity went forth.' 'They pitched their tents in the camps of the wandering Tartar, the Lama of Tibet trembled at their words,

they stood in the rice fields of the Punjab, and taught fishermen by the Sea of Aral, they struggled through the vast deserts of Mongolia, the memorable inscription of Hsi-an-fu attests their victories in China. In India the Zamorin (of Calicut) himself respected their spiritual and courted their temporal authority. . . . They braved alike pagan and fire-worshipper, the burning suns of Tiflis and the feverish swamps of Imeretia. They subjugated the border lands of Europe and Asia and planted a colony half way up the great (mountain of) Ararat.' [1]

There are definite instances of persons embracing Christianity through the testimony of Christian merchants and physicians in the countries to which the latter went by land, and it can be safely assumed that the same was true of those who travelled by sea and of the sailors who manned the vessels.

Even a state of war did not necessarily prevent the Syrian merchants from carrying their wares from place to place. Jerome speaks of the Huns as having learnt the Psalms taught by these same Syrian merchants 'who burn by the very warmth of their faith.' [2] The Syrians have an innate love of commerce, and the desire for gain, Jerome says, makes them overrun the world. But was it only the desire for gain? Vambéry speaks of the 'feverish activity' [3] of the Nestorians in spreading abroad their faith—a description which seems to be singularly

[1] Neale, *History of the Holy Eastern Church*, Vol. I, p. 3.
[2] Nau, *L'expansion nestorienne en asie*, p. 243.
[3] Vambéry, *History of Bokhara*, p. 16.

appropriate. 'He loved me and gave himself for me' therefore 'I glory in tribulation' was the language of their lives and probably also of the lips. It was this self-abnegation that gave them the secret of the multiplied life, and having drunk of the living waters themselves, from them there flowed forth 'rivers of living water.'

That Christ was very real to these early Christians is evident from what we are told about them elsewhere, and offers an explanation of the marvellous results of their testimony and ministry. Bardaisan, who wrote about A.D. 196, describing the character and conduct of the Christians, records: 'We are called Christians by the one name of the Messiah. As regards our customs our brethren abstain from everything that is contrary to their profession, e.g., Parthian Christians do not take two wives. Jewish Christians are not circumcised. Our Bactrian sisters do not practice promiscuity with strangers. Persians do not take their daughters to wife. Medes do not desert their dying relations or bury them alive. Christians in Edessa do not kill their wives or sisters who commit fornication but keep them apart and commit them to the judgement of God. Christians in Hatra do not stone thieves.'[1] The change in the character and conduct of those who became followers of Christ was something that could be seen by and known to all.

To the early Christian ascetics the earthly life seemed only valuable for that which could be

[1] Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity*, pp. 115, 184.

taken away when the existence here was over. The merchant's goods were worth nothing in comparison to the pearl of great price. 'We speak' said they 'of God and our Lord Jesus and of Angels and watchers and holy ones, of the new world, of the incorruptible food of the tree of life, of what eye hath not seen nor ear heard nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God hath prepared from of old for those who love Him.'[1] Such was the calibre of the men who helped to bring the knowledge of salvation to countless numbers throughout central and further Asia.

They served as secretaries and physicians to Turks, Mongols and others, and, as mentioned elsewhere, not only taught the people, amongst whom they laboured, letters, but invented alphabets for them based on Syriac. According to Nau, the Pahlawi alphabet, perfected by Nestorian scribes, constitutes to-day the basis of the Corean alphabet.

As an instance of the place and influence of the Nestorian laity in Christian propaganda the following affords an illustration: Mar Abha the great, who was patriarch of Seleucia A.D. 540–552, was by birth and education a Zoroastrian, a member of the great Magian clan, before he became a Christian.[2] Like Nicodemus among the Jews, he was learned in the theology and philosophy of his faith, and was not only 'instructor of Magi' but secretary to the governor of the province. He became a convert to

[1] Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity*, p. 224.
[2] Wigram, *History of the Assyrian Church*, p. 184.

Christianity as a result of the courtesy and humility of a Jewish Christian. When about to cross the Tigris in a ferry boat he had ordered the Jew, Joseph by name, out of the boat until he himself had crossed. Twice he attempted to reach the other side, and on both occasions was driven back by the wind. He then invited the man to board the vessel and was immediately able to cross without further difficulty. He discovered that his fellow passenger was a Christian, and not as he had thought, a Marcionite, and was so impressed by his courtesy and humility that before long he too became a Christian, gave up his official prospects and asked for baptism, intending to become an ascetic. Before doing so, however, he went to Nisibis to spend some time in study, where he so distinguished himself that he was persuaded to become a teacher. Later he became patriarch and did noble service for Christ at the cost of constant persecution by the Magi and repeated attempts to put him to death.

The great persecution under Sapor and others scattered abroad both clergy and laity. Of Barsabas, a bishop either in Parthia or Media, it is recorded that although he had been the means of setting free both Sapor's wife and sister from the power of a demon he had to flee into Khorasan to escape persecution. He acted as chief bishop of Marna for a period of fifteen years.[1] Monks and ascetics when they were not slain, were no doubt similarly forced to flee and as a result carried the gospel

[1] Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, Vol. III, ii, pp. 56, 425.

wherever they went. Through this medium the gospel spread throughout all Persia, from Adiabene and Beth-Garma, where the persecution seems to have been most severe, to Chalachenia, Elam, Persia proper and Media: to the Dailamites and the Gelae, then into Transoxania, Samarkand, Bokhara, Fergana, Balkh, Tus and other places in Bactria.[1]

The country of the Gilanians south west of the Caspian and that of Gog and Magog, as the Turks and Tartars were called, is said to have received the gospel at the hands of Aggai a disciple of Addai as early as A.D. 120-140, and we find the same places referred to again in a Syriac book entitled *The Doctrine of the Apostles* written in A.D. 250.[2]

In the year A.D. 424, among the signatories present at a council held under the presidency of the patriarch of Seleucia, we find the names of the bishops of Rai, Ispahan, Segestan, Nischabour, Herat and Merw.

On or about A.D. 498 the Sassasian king Kawad or Kubad twice took refuge with the Hephtalite Huns and Turks because of a rebellion in Persia. He found Christians there who helped him to recover his throne, and was favourably inclined to them because of this. On one of the occasions when he fled to the country of the Turks he was accompanied on his journey by the bishop of Arran, four presbyters and two laymen, who were journeying thither as missionaries in response to a vision which

[1] Assemani, III, ii, pp. 418–424.
[2] Mingana, *Early Spread of Christianity*, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. IX, p. 303.

had appeared to the bishop, in which he was commanded to proceed to the country of the Turks and to instruct them and also the numerous Byzantine captives there in the truths of the gospel.[1] The daily food of this band of missionaries was a loaf of bread each and a jar of water. They were very successful in their mission and large numbers of Turks were baptized into the Christian faith.

The presbyters remained with them for seven years and taught the Turks the art of writing in their own language. The laymen settled down there, married and had children, and only returned to their own country in A.D. 530, after an absence of thirty years.

King Kawad himself was touched by the grace of God and gave up eating unclean meat. He had a Christian physician named Joseph, whom he greatly honoured and who afterwards became patriarch.

Probus, a messenger of the Roman emperor Justinian, who was sent on a special mission to the Turks about that time, was astonished at what he saw and at what God had accomplished through His servants.

In A.D. 781 Timothy, the Nestorian patriarch at that time, wrote that another king of the Turks had 'become Christian with all his people.'[2] The king requested Timothy to appoint a metropolitan for his country, and this was done. In a letter to a

[1] Mingana, *Early spread of Christianity*, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol, IX, p. 303.
[2] *Idem*, Vol. IX, p. 306.

certain Rabban Sergius, the same patriarch states that having ordained a metropolitan for the Turks, he was about to do the same for Tibet. In yet another letter to Sergius, Timothy writes that in his time many monks crossed the sea and went with only staff and scrip to the Indians and the Chinese. In the same letter he refers to the death of the metropolitan of China.[1]

Thomas of Marga tells how this indefatigable patriarch selected more than four-score monks, some of whom he ordained bishops and sent forth to preach the gospel to the heathen in the far east.[2] Others, we are told, preached in the countries of the Dailamites, the Gilanians and other savage races and 'planted in them the light of the truth of the gospel, of our Lord.' They evangelized and baptized many, worked miracles, and showed signs, and the fame of their exploits reached the furthest parts of the east. Information regarding the work thus carried on was brought to Timothy by letters from merchants who had gone to these regions for purposes of trade, from secretaries employed by the kings of those parts, and others. One of those ordained by Timothy was Shabhalisho, who was specially fitted by his linguistic and other gifts for the great work to which he had been called. Of him it is said—He taught and baptized many in towns and villages and 'brought them to the teaching of divine life.' He built churches and appointed priests and deacons to care

[1] Mingana, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. IX, p. 306.
[2] Idem, p. 307.

for them. He penetrated to the furthest extremes of the east and evangelized pagans, Marcionites and Manicheans, sowing the 'sublime light of . . . the gospel, the source of life and peace.'

Timothy is credited with having been the means of the conversion of the Kaghan of the Turks, and of other kings with whom he had been in correspondence.[1]

Mingana gives a list of no fewer than twenty-one towns, districts, and provinces to the west of the river Oxus alone (those on the eastern side are referred to separately) which had episcopal sees, and regarding which one or more bishops are mentioned as having been appointed in the fifth and sixth centuries.[2] These include amongst others, Herat a town in Khurasan, north west of modern Afghanistan (no less than four bishops are mentioned in connection with it in the centuries referred to); Gilan, a province on the south west coast of the Caspian, famous for its eighteen martyrs who suffered martyrdom on April 12th A.D. 351 under Sapor II; Merw, a celebrated town north of Khurasan, referred to in the accounts of not less than six synods in the same period; Ray, or Rai, a very important town situated north east of Jibal province and thirty miles south east of modern Teheran; Sijistan (Seistan), a well known province, now part of modern Afghanistan, and many others.

[1] Mingana, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. IX, p. 308.
[2] Idem, pp. 318–20.

India: Attention is now directed to India which so far has scarcely been referred to. That there were strong Christian communities all over the continent, north, south and central, as well as in the Island of Ceylon, is beyond doubt. Mingana gives a list of no less than thirty-six bishoprics, some of them metropolitan sees, either on the routes to, or in the proximity of India.[1] These include such places as Ardashir Kurra—modern Firuzabad in the province of Fars, Ardashir Pharihd in Baluchistan, Baith Katrage, Hormizd Ardashir, Karka de Laidan in Khuzistan, Riwardshir the metropolis of the province of Fars, Sus or Susa, and many others. Pherat Maishan, the modern Basra, on the Persian Gulf was a bishopric in A.D. 225, as was the country of the Katars on the Arabian side of the gulf.[2] Baith Lapat, afterwards called Gundeshapur, had also bishops from A.D. 225 onwards. In the neighbourhood of Afghanistan and Baluchistan also there were Christian bishoprics and Christian communities. With so many centres of influence it would have been strange if Christian merchants and missionaries from these different centres had not penetrated the passes leading into India from the north and north west, bringing their faith with them. The Syrian Christians of Travancore and Cochin—the one community which has been able to maintain its identity unbroken down through the centuries—will be referred to later, but there are

[1] *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. X, 2, p. 490.
[2] Idem, p. 437.

solid grounds for believing that a fairly large Christian community existed in north India also from very early times. 'The majority of these were undoubtedly Indians by blood and ancestry who had embraced the new faith for its own sake, as proselytes of Christian missionaries from Persia and Mesopotamia.'[1]

Whether their beginnings were due to the teaching of Thomas, as tradition strongly asserts, or some one else whose name is unknown, it can be asserted that the missionary activity of Nestorian merchants, artisans and clergy in the subsequent centuries must have contributed considerably to their development and growth. The fact stated by Prof. Herzfeld in a recent lecture that 'the whole of north west India was a vast province of the Persian Empire in the third century, governed by Persian officials' must also have been a contributing factor in the spread of Christianity in these regions. In the fourth century there was a great persecution under Sapor II, and this was followed up in the next century by still greater oppression under Yezdegerd and Bahram V. If refugees from these persecutions and bands of earnest missionaries from the monastery of Beth-Abhe and other centres carried the gospel message to other provinces of the empire, it is inconceivable that the province of India would be left untouched. Nay more, the fact that there were Christian communities already there would in itself prove a constraining force, stronger even than their fear of Sapor. Confirmation of the existence of Christian

[1] *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, p. Vol. X, ?, 437.

communities in India in the very early centuries comes from various sources.

The Edessene writer of the *Doctrine of the Apostles*, A.D. 250, was at least vaguely aware of such bodies. He writes: 'India and all its own countries and those bordering on it even to the furthest sea received the apostles' hand of priesthood from Judas Thomas who was guide and ruler in the church which he built there.' [1]

During the patriarchate of Papa, A.D. 295-300, Dudi (David), bishop of Basra, left his see, we are told, and went to India where he evangelized many people.

St. Ephrem, who died A.D. 373, wrote a number of hymns about St. Thomas in some of which he refers to the existence of Christians in India, e.g., 'Lo! in India are thy miracles O Thomas.' 'The sunburnt India thou hast made fair, the tainted mind of dark people thou hast purified.' 'The cross of light has obliterated India's darkened shades.'

The Arian Philostorgius, writing about Theophilus the Indian referred to elsewhere as having been sent on a mission by the emperor Constantius to Arabia, Abyssinia, Ceylon and India, says: 'Thence' (i.e., from Divu) 'he sailed to other parts of India and reformed many things which were not rightly done among them, for they heard the reading of the gospel in a sitting posture and did other things repugnant to the divine law.' [2] Implying

[1] *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. X, 2, p. 448.
[2] Idem, p. 458.

that there were (1) resident congregations, (2) church services regularly held at which the gospels were read and consequently, (3) a ministering clergy; all going to show beyond any reasonable doubt that the Christian community in India in A. D. 354 was an indigenous community.

In the fifth century Indian Christianity was so advanced as to be able to send presbyters to be educated in the best schools of the eastern Syrian church. In a precious colophon to his commentary on the epistle to the Romans, Isho'dad (A. D. 425) writes as follows: 'This epistle has been translated from Greek into Syriac by Mar Komai with the help of Daniel, the priest, the Indian.' This passage proves also that the ecclesiastical language of India at the beginning of the fifth century was Syriac and not any of the many Indian dialects. Incidentally it shows the close connection of the church in 'India with the Church of the East.' Throughout its whole history the church in India was under the direction and control of the patriarch of 'the Church of the East' 'the greatest missionary church the world has ever known.'[1]

In A.D. 470 we find a reference by Ma'na bishop of Riwardashir to his having translated the works of Diodore and Theodore of Mopsuestia from Greek into Syriac, and his having sent 'to the islands of the sea (=Bahrein) and to India all the books he had translated.'[2]

[1] *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. X, 2, p. 459.
[2] Idem, pp. 440, 447.

Assemani quotes Cosmas as having in the year A.D. 525 found Christians not only in Socotra and Ceylon but in the Ganges valley, Pegu, Cochinchina, Siam and Tonquin.[1] Cosmas writing in that year states that among the Bactrians, Huns 'and the rest of the Indians', Persarmenians, Medes and Elamites and throughout the whole land of Persia there was no limit to the number of churches, bishops and large Christian communities, adding that there were many martyrs, and numbers of monks and ascetics.[2] Osorius and Jarricus who wrote centuries after Cosmas, and are quoted by Assemani, speak of numerous Nestorian communities on the river Ganges, also in central and eastern India.[3]

In the seventh century the Nestorian patriarch Isho-Yabh III (A.D. 650–660) had occasion to rebuke the metropolitan of Riwardashir for conduct subversive to the unity of the patriarchate. In his letter to the metropolitan he states that as the result of his action the 'episcopal succession has been interrupted in India,' and that it had been deprived of 'divine teaching by means of rightful bishops' . . . and not only India that extends from the borders of the Persian empire to the country which is called Kalah which is a distance of one thousand two hundred parasangs,[4] but your own Fars.'[5] Mingana thinks Kalah=Galla in Ceylon, but Yule identifies

[1] Assemani, Vol. III, ii, p. 521.
[2] Cosmas, *Christian Topography*, Hakluyt Edn., p. 120.
[3] *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. X, 2, p. 486.
[4] A parasang=3·88 miles.
[5] *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. X, 2, p. 464.

it with Kaulam = Quilon, in Travancore. The inference in either case is that over this whole area bishops and priests, sees and parishes with Christian communities were widely spread. Later still, an ancient author by the name of Morinus speaks of the Nestorian patriarch as sending bishops and archbishops to all parts of India, as the Pope of Rome does for Catholic countries.[1] In a letter from the Nestorian patriarch Timothy I (A.D. 779–823) to the monks of Mar Maron regarding the addition of the formula 'crucifixus es pro nobis' to the trisagion he writes: 'In all the countries of the sunrise, that is to say, among the Indians, the Chinese, the Tibetans, the Turks and all the provinces under the jurisdiction of this patriarchal see, there is no addition of 'crucifixus es pro nobis.'

Metropolitans of India are referred to more than once. On one occasion we find the metropolitan of India grouped together with those of Samarkand and China, by the patriarch Theodore (A.D. 852–858). On another we are told that the patriarch Elijah V (A.D. 1503) ordained three metropolitans and sent them to India, China and Dabag (= Java). The metropolitan of Java was fifteenth in rank among the metropolitans. The fact of metropolitans being appointed at all, presupposes not only from six to twelve suffragan bishops but a very large number of Christians under each metropolitan.

In view of these facts, confirmed as they are from so many different sources, it is rather surpri-

[1] *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. X, 2, p. 486.

sing to find such a careful writer as B. J. Kidd, in his *History of the Church*, speaking as if no such wide-spread missionary activity had ever existed. 'From the shores of the Persian Gulf (and the Red Sea) onwards' he says 'lay the districts vaguely called India by the ancients. None of the tribes offered much of a field to Christian Missions.'[1] In an attempt to explain away the Christians found by Cosmas on the shores of India, in Socotra, and on the Persian Gulf, Kidd adds, 'they were colonists from the church of Persia and a remnant of them still survives in the Christians of St. Thomas on the Malabar Coast.'[2] Although Cosmas speaks of Socotra as having a multitude of Christians, and says that there was no limit to the number of churches, and large Christian communities in the places referred to.[3]

Kidd himself further on in the same book refers to 'Theophilus, the Indian, who came from Ceylon in the days of Constantine and was consecrated bishop in A.D. 356.' That Theophilus, according to Kidd, was an Arian does not alter the fact that he was a native of India. As already stated, Assemani believes that Theophilus came not from Ceylon but from the island of Divu at the mouth of the Indus. A bishop of India is also said to have been present at the council of Nicea in A.D. 325, but as the name India was sometimes applied to

[1] Kidd, *History of the Church to A.D. 461*, p. 426.
[2] Idem, p. 429.
[3] Cosmas, *Christian Topography*, pp. 118–119.

southern Arabia and other parts of the Mekran coast, very little weight can be attached to this.[1] If he came from India proper it must have been the Persian province of that name, viz., north-west India.

Patna is mentioned as the seat of a metropolitan in the year A.D. 1222[2] and Marco Polo, who visited India about the end of the thirteenth century states that there were then in middle (*central*) India, six great kings and kingdoms, and that three of these were Christian and three Saracen.[3] The Christians branded themselves on either cheek and on the forehead. St. Thomas, he says, preached in this region and, after he had converted the people, went to the province of Maabar (the former name of the east coast of South India of which Mylapore seems to have been the capital or one of the chief towns) where he died.

Abd-er-Razzak, who visited India in 1442, said that the vizier of Vijayanagar in the Deccan was a Christian, his name being Nimeh-pezir.[4] Abd-er-Razzak's estimate of Nimeh-pezir does not appear to have been very high, because when the latter came into power he stopped the daily allowance which Razzak and his party had been receiving from the state. Nicolo Conti, who visited India in the same century as Abd-er-Razzak, states that in the city of Malepur (Madras) he found 1,000 Nestorians, and adds that

[1] Hough, *History of Christianity in India*, Vol. I, p. 58.
[2] Wiltsch, *Geography and Statistics of the Church*, pp. 163–168.
[3] Cordiers, *Marco Polo*, Vol. II, p. 427.
[4] *Hakluyt Library*, 1st Series, Vol. XXII, p. 41.

Nestorians 'are scattered all over India as the Jews are among us.'[1]

Further on he speaks of these same Nestorians 'who are spread all over India' as being the only exceptions in the matter of polygamy. They 'confine themselves to one solitary mate.' Conti met a person from North India who said that there was a kingdom twenty days' journey from Cathay of which the king and all the inhabitants were Christians but heretics, being, it was said, Nestorians.[2] This man had visited India to obtain information about the Christians who were reported to exist towards the western sun. The churches of the Christians from where he had come were, he said, larger and more beautiful than those in India.

At Tana also and at Kalayan near Bombay there were Christian families, and in an old map (called the Catalan map) dated 1375, there is found a note referring apparently to a place in the province of Orissa, as follows: 'here reigns K. Stephen, a Christian. Look for the city Butifilis.' Butifilis is near modern Cuttack, but Yule calls it Mutifilis and places it much further south near Vizagapatam, or between it and Masulipatam—towns several hundred miles north of Madras.

How widely spread Christianity was in Northern India may be inferred from the fact that Gandispur (modern Shahabad) in the Punjab, which tradition associates with St. Thomas and where, later, there

[1] Nicolo Conti, *India in the Fifteenth Century*, p. 7.
[2] Idem, p. 33.

was a famous medical school,[1] is referred to by Elias metropolitan of Damascus as the seat of a metropolitan in A.D. 893, and is also included in the list given by Amr, A.D. 1349.[2]

As late as A.D. 1506 a certain Louis of Varthema met, in Bengal, Nestorian merchants who came from Sarnam or Ayoutha the ancient capital of Siam.[3] They conducted him to Pegu (in Burmah) where the king had 1,000 Christians in his service. The merchants took Louis with them when they went to trade at Borneo, at Java, and even to the Molucca islands.

There is a remark which is at least suggestive in the story of 'the jackal and the deer' taken from Book I Fable 3 of *The Hitopadeca* (Sanscrit), where the jackal uses the words 'The snares are made of sinew; how can I to-day, on the Lord's Day, touch these with my teeth.'[4] *The Hitopadeca* is not an original work, but rather an excellent compilation of original material. In its present form it is supposed to be not less than five hundred years old. The original from which it was copied may probably be five hundred years older still. If the words 'the Lord's Day' reflect Christian influence and teaching, as they probably do, the inference is that one thousand years ago or more, the writer of the fable referred to had such knowledge of Christian teaching and practice as led him to make the remark quoted.

[1] Barthold, *Zur Geschichte des Christentums en mittel Asien*, p. 27.
[2] Yule, *Cathay and the way thither*, III, p. 22 ff.
[3] Nau, *L'expansion nestorienne en Asie*, p. 278.
[4] Laumon's *Sanscrit Reader*, p. 25.

A reference of a more definite kind is found in the Gazetteer of the Kanara district of the Bombay Presidency, Vol. XV, p. 397, where there is an account of a forest tribe of Mahratha Sidis, now Hindus, whose family names bear witness to a time when they were Christians.[1] Sir W. W. Hunter is of opinion that there were probably many similar reversions to paganism.

Confirmation of the fact that there were many Christian Mahrathas two hundred years ago is to be found in a book published in A.D. 1910 entitled *History of the Telugu Christians*. It gives an account of early Roman Catholic Missions in the Telugu country, and consists chiefly of extracts from letters sent by the missionaries of that time to their superiors in Paris, and published there under the title of *Lettres Edifiantes et Curieuses*.[2] One of the letters tells how the armies of the Mahrattas,[3] which swept over the Carnatic every year to collect the revenue, called Chout,[4] which had been assigned to them as tribute by Hussain Ali in A.D. 1714 in return for help rendered, had, among them, a numerous and devoted Christian community which was the cause of many conversions and baptisms. In each of their armies there were considerable numbers of Christian families who were in the habit of appointing one of themselves to act as catechist. They

[1] W. W. Hunter, *The Indian Empire*, p. 240.
[2] *History of R. C. Telugu Christians*, p. 236.
[3] Morari Rao a famous Mahratta chief had his headquarters in Gooty Fort in A.D. 1746.
[4] Chout: for particulars re this form of tribute see *North Arcot District Manual of 1895*, Vol. I, p. 47.

had a large tent for their religious services which on Sundays they decorated after the manner of a church. All the Christians were expected to assemble there for prayer and instruction, and absentees were severely punished.

In another place we are told that the Nabob of Arcot held the Christians in great esteem and had a company of twenty-five Christians who were always on duty as sentinels at the palace.[1] Besides this there were a great many Christians among his troops who never failed to meet for worship on Sundays even in war time. Later we read of a whole battalion of four hundred Christian soldiers in the service of the Nabob.

Still another letter speaks of an important Sudra caste called the ill' ellani Kamavarus, many of whom were Christians.[2] Originally from the Cuddapah district, they were at that time found chiefly in the Guntur, Nellore and Chingleput districts, and were called Gandikota Kammas. Where and when these Kamma Christians embraced Christianity is not known; but they prided themselves on the prestige of their ancestors, and said that their forefathers occupied honourable positions in the service of Nabobs and Rajahs of bygone days.

The only other proof of the existence of large Christian communities in different parts of India as the result of Nestorian Missionary activity in the early centuries to which we shall at present refer, is

[1] *History of R.C. Telugu Christians*, p. 258.
[2] Idem, p. 294.

the fact that such communities exist even to-day in that part of India which to a large extent escaped the domination of Islam. The area referred to extends, roughly speaking, from the latitude of Madras to the extreme south of the peninsula. It includes also the island of Ceylon. Omitting for the present the Christians in the native states of Travancore and Cochin, there are, scattered over the southern part of the presidency, large Roman Catholic communities, totalling, including Ceylon, upwards of a million people and outnumbering the Protestant Christian community by about four to one. In some districts the ratio is as high as ten or twelve and even twenty to one. The existence of these large communities cannot be explained in any other way than that they are the descendants of those won to Christ by the Nestorian missionaries of more than a thousand years ago. How they came to be classed as Roman Catholics will be referred to later. For the present it is sufficient to note that they exist even if they have long since ceased to be either aggressive or numerically progressive. That they are not originally the outcome of Roman Catholic missionary enterprise may be gathered from the writings of Roman Catholic historians and in other ways.

The first regularly equipped Catholic mission to begin work in India was that of the Franciscan brethren who arrived from Portugal in A.D. 1500.[1] The Jesuits under Francis Xavier came next in A.D. 1542. Others came later. Xavier himself spent only

[1] W. W. Hunter, *The Indian Empire*, p. 244.

seven or eight years in the country and never learned the vernacular. His work was mainly among the fisher people in the neighbourhood of Tuticorin and the already nominal Christians of Travancore. With one exception he never visited the interior. The exception referred to was a journey lasting about a week into the Madura district.[1] When he returned he said the people there were not yet fit for the kingdom of God. Nothing further regarding his visit is known.

Not till seventy years after Xavier do we find the first reference to Roman Catholic missions in Madura. The most noted of their missionaries was Robert de Nobili, who sought to win the Brahmins and those of higher castes by passing himself off as a Roman rajah and Sanniyasi.[2] He and a few others are said to have baptized 100,000 persons in forty-five years. The total number of Christians in South India at that time, including Travancore, is given as one million two hundred thousand.[3] Whether this is correct or not we have no means of verifying. That, even then, they were not all classed as converts from heathenism is clear from the statement of the Roman Catholic writer of *Lettres Edifiantes et Curieuses* that the 'Indian mission embracing Madura, Mysore, the Carnatic, on the coast, and in the neighbouring provinces of Travancore and Comorin, was the most flourishing in the world, and that notwithstanding famine and war it numbered

[1] Strickland and Marshall, *Catholic Missions in South India*, p. 36.
[2] Idem, p. 41. [3] Idem, p. 46.

then (about A.D. 1736) more than 300,000 Christians.' Ceylon, which to-day has a Catholic community of 380,000, was said to be so completely Christian (meaning Roman Catholic) when the Dutch Protestants took possession in A.D. 1650 that 'all their efforts and cruel persecutions could not eradicate it.' The question naturally arises where did all these large communities come from? There is no evidence to prove, nor is it anywhere claimed, that they were all the result of Roman Catholic missionary effort, but rather the reverse.

But it is not only in Roman Catholic communities that we necessarily find the representatives of those early Christians. How many of them have found their way, via Roman Catholicism, into Protestant missions it is impossible to tell, but of the first one hundred mission agents of the American Madura Mission we are told that, while twenty-four were from Protestant, thirty-six were from Roman Catholic families, the remainder being of Hindu origin.[1] Numbers of the early C.M.S. converts in Tinnevelly were also originally Roman Catholics, and the same is probably true of other South Indian missions.

But Nestorian missionary enterprise did not content itself with having carried the gospel message to Central Asia, the different provinces of the Persian empire and the remainder of India and Ceylon. It reached out even to the Malayan islands such as Sumatra, Java, and other groups lying between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Beyond the

[1] Chandler, *Seventy-five years in the Madura Mission*, p. 98.

statement by Louis of Varthema already referred to, we have very little direct information regarding these, but history tells us of at least two metropolitans who were sent to Java by the patriarch of Babylon, the last being in A.D. 1503. How many were appointed other than those we have no means of knowing, but the fact that there were metropolitans there at all suggests the existence of a very numerous and widespread Christian community in the Malayan Archipelago prior to the advent of either the Spanish or the Portuguese in the sixteenth century, and tends to confirm the statement already made that the difficulty is not so much to find a place to which these indefatigable missionaries have gone as one where they have not been.

Note: In the Phillipine islands, with an estimated population in 1891 of more than seven and a half millions, five and a half, or more than two-thirds, were Roman Catholics, at least nominally, the result no doubt of three and a half centuries of Spanish rule. The much smaller population of the Molucca or Spice islands, on the other hand, were Protestant under Dutch rule. It may be a mere coincidence, but judged by what we know of the treatment meted out by the Portuguese to the Christians whom they found in South India and Ceylon when they first arrived, it is at least possible that what happened there under the Portuguese had its counterpart in the Phillipines under the Spanish, supported as both were by the Jesuits and the Inquisition. The probability is that when the Spaniards in the sixteenth century took possession of the Phillipines, they found Christianity already widely spread in the islands, and adopted similar methods to those made use of by the Portuguese to compel acceptance of Roman Catholic doctrines and practice. If this were not so, is there any record of such a wide-spread spiritual awakening in the Phillipines under the Spaniards as would account for such a large proportion of the inhabitants being even nominally Christian?

The Spice islands being under a Protestant power, any who were Christians there when the Dutch took possession would have less difficulty in adapting themselves to the new order of things.

CHAPTER V

SYRIAN CHRISTIANS OF SOUTH-WEST INDIA

As already mentioned, with the exception of the small remnant in the neighbourhood of Qudshanis in Kurdistan, the only section of the Nestorian Church that has been able to maintain its distinctive identity down through the centuries to the present time is the Syrian Christian community of south-west India.

The territory where this important body is to be found includes the central and northern part of Travancore, the whole of Cochin state, and a small portion of the adjoining British District of Malabar.

It is, roughly, 200 miles long by thirty to forty miles wide, and has to-day a population of nearly five millions—the proportion of Christians being rather more than one in four.

The large majority of these are Syrian or St. Thomas Christians, who claim to have received the gospel, in the first instance, at the hands of St. Thomas. Until the time of the Portuguese supremacy in the sixteenth century they were classed as Nestorians.

Sometimes they were called the 'Christians of the Serra' the Portuguese word for mountains, because they lived on, or at the foot of, the Western Ghauts—a range of hills rising to 9000 feet in

height and forming the eastern boundary of the two states. They were known as St. Thomas Christians because they claimed to be the spiritual children of St. Thomas. The name Syrian is given to them, not only because their liturgies and scriptures are in Syriac or Aramaic, but also because they received reinforcements from Syria and Mesopotamia in the early centuries.[1]

They were also called Nestorians because they held the doctrines subscribed to by the 'Church of the East,' and for purposes of ecclesiastical jurisdiction were subject to the Patriarch of Babylon (as the Nestorian patriarch is called) whose headquarters were at Seleucia-Ctesiphon till A.D. 762, when they were removed to Baghdad. The headquarters continued to be in Baghdad until A.D. 1258, when they were transferred to Mosul where they remained until A.D. 1400, after which date they were moved to Qudshanis in the mountains of Kurdistan where they are still.

Local tradition claims St. Thomas as the founder of the church.[2] It is stated that he landed in A.D. 52 at Malankara, an island in the lagoon near Cranganore in Cochin, 'a place that is now an obscure hamlet, but was in those days a flourishing seaport called, by ancient geographers, Muziri.'[3]

Dr. Farquhar thinks there is reason to believe that the apostle 'sailed from Alexandria with Habban,

[1] Richards, *The Indian Christians of St. Thomas*, pp. 1, 2.
[2] W. F. Adeney, *The Greek and Eastern Churches*, p. 511.
[3] *Catholic Directory of India, Burmah and Ceylon* (1925), p. 242.

the merchant of King Gudnaphar, to the Indus, and reached the king's capital Taxila (in what is now known as the Punjab)' probably about A.D. 48–49, that he left Taxila when the Punjab and its capital were seized by the Indo-Scythian Kushans from China about A.D. 50 and went from there to Muziri on the Malabar Coast via Socotra, reaching Muziri A.D. 51–52 as tradition asserts.[1]

Another tradition is to the effect that many from all classes of society were converted to Christianity by his preaching. Seven churches were established by him, and clergy ordained to be in charge over them. He then proceeded to Mylapore (now part of the city of Madras) where the king and all his people turned to Christ. From there he went to China and spent some time at the city of Camballe, returning later to Mylapore, where the Brahmins, moved by jealousy, instigated the people to stone him to death, after which one of them pierced him with a lance.[2]

The date of St. Thomas's death is given as A.D. 72, and the place of burial as Mylapore, a few miles from St. Thomas' Mount where the actual martyrdom is stated to have taken place. His remains were, it is claimed, removed from Mylapore to Edessa at a very early date. From there, later on, they were taken to Chios, an island in the Aegean sea, and later still to Ortona in Italy where they now repose. The supposed grave at Mylapore is still

[1] *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. XI, i, p. 20.
[2] Hough, *History of Christianity in India*, Vol. I, p. 32.

on view. It is in the nave of the new Roman Catholic Cathedral there, completed in A.D. 1896, and is visited by large numbers of pilgrims from different parts of South India and particularly from the Malabar Coast.

That the tradition, on the face of it, is partly legendary is evident from the reference to Camballe or Khanbaliq in China. The meaning of Khanbaliq is the emperor's city. It is now known by the modern name of Pekin. Khanbaliq, however, did not become the capital of China until the time of Kublai Khan in the thirteenth century. That St. Thomas was martyred at or near St. Thomas' Mount has also been questioned. Heracleon, a Sicilian Gnostic who lived about A.D. 170, asserts that St. Thomas ended his days in peace, and it is stated that not till the latter half of the fourth century did the legend of his martyrdom begin to grow up.

Whatever difference of opinion there may be as to how, when, or where St. Thomas died, or as to what he did and the churches he founded, it is at all events practically certain that he did visit India both north and south, and spent a considerable time there preaching the gospel wherever he went. The mass of tradition, especially that bearing on his stay in the south, is too great to be ignored or lightly passed over. There is the additional evidence that large Christian communities calling themselves by his name and claiming him as their founder still exist. If St. Thomas is ruled out of any connection with these, can any other explanation of their origin

be given that at all fits in with what is known of their previous history?

It is not, however, until towards the close of the second century A.D. that there is the first definite information about the sending of the gospel message to India. It is on record that, in response to a request preferred by certain Indians to Demetrius, the then bishop of Alexandria, that some one might be sent to instruct them in the doctrine of Christ, Pantaenus,[1] (flor. c. A.D. 185) a Stoic philosopher who had been converted to Christ and who afterwards became head of the theological school in Alexandria, offered himself for the task. There is no account as to the length of his mission and the area covered. It has even been questioned whether the India to which he went was the country that is now known by that name. That this contention is wrong there is very little doubt, as is proved by the writings of Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 160–220) a favourite pupil of Pantaenus. Clement speaks not only of the Yogis of India but also of the Brahmins. The latter, he said, were those 'who obeyed the commandments of Buddha whom they honour as a god because of the holiness of his life.'[2] The reference by Clement is conclusive that Pantaenus visited India, although it does not prove that he went as far as Travancore. Still if he went by sea, it is equally probable that he arrived at Travancore as that he landed anywhere else.

[1] Hough, *History of Christianity in India*, Vol. I, p. 47.
[2] Idem, Vol. I, pp. 50, 51.

Dr. Mingana questions the visit of Pantaenus to India at all. He is of opinion that the India visited by Pantaenus was only Arabia Felix, and adds, 'It will be a matter of surprise if any responsible author will ever mention in the future Pantaenus in connection with India proper.'[1] Notwithstanding the deservedly high reputation of Dr. Mingana and his well known erudition, one ventures to differ from him in the conclusion to which he has come. The statement by Clement, derived presumably from Pantaenus, that the Brahmins were those who obeyed the commandments of Buddha whom they honour as a god is quite conclusive. Where else than in India proper could a traveller from the West have got information that would cause him to join Brahmins and Buddhists together in this way? As will be shown later, Hinduism, of which the Brahmins are now the chief exponents, was not developed until after A.D. 600. At the date when Pantaenus is said to have visited India, Brahmins and Sramans, as the Buddhist ascetics were called, were working together in closest harmony. It was not until two or three centuries later that they began to draw apart. Even when the Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang visited India (A.D. 629–645) the separation of the two was still incomplete, the Buddhists being in the ascendant in some places and the Brahmins in others. The fact that Pantaenus associates Brahmins with Buddhists so correctly describes the condition of

[1] *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. X, 2, p. 449.

things then existing that it stamps his account as that of an eye witness.

Although it seems practically certain that Christianity had obtained a foothold in South India at a very early date, it is extremely probable that the flame of evangelical fervour had flickered considerably prior to the year A.D. 345 when, as one of the results of the great persecution under Sapor II, there came that new influx of Christian life and activity which changed the whole situation.[1] The Christians in South India became such a force that later kings and rulers were ready to confer special privileges on them in order to secure the favour and support of such an influential body.

Tradition informs us that sometime prior to A.D. 345 a Syrian merchant named Thomas of Cana, or Knai Thomas visited Malabar and, being struck by the waning condition of the church there, returned to his own country and represented the matter to the Patriarch of Seleucia, who sent with him to Malabar Mar Joseph, metropolitan of Urfu, and certain other clergy and a colony of 400 Syrians who landed at Cranganore in the year mentioned.

Hough in his *History of Christianity in India* says that the leader of the Christian colony, referred to later, which arrived from the west in the latter part of the eighth century, was also called Thomas of Cana or Mar Thomas. It is, of course, quite possible that there may have been two Mar Thomases,

[1] Richards, *The Indian Christians of St. Thomas*, pp. 6 ff.

but there is no reference to any one of that name either in the tablet given by king Vira Raghava Chakravarti to Iravi Cortan in A.D. 774, the date of the arrival of the second company mentioned above, or in the Sthanu Ravi Gupta tablets fifty years later.

Mar Thomas was very wealthy and had an extensive business.[1] He was twice married and had a large family by each of his wives. During the period of his first marriage he resided near Cranganore in southern Cochin. His second wife was a Nair woman, and during this period he lived in or near Angamalai which was further north. On his death his property was divided among his children, those in the south getting such of it as was situated there and those in the north falling heir to what lay in that district. Both families increased rapidly, and later combined with other Christians, so that soon the whole community came to regard Mar Thomas as their common ancestor. The two sections, however, continued quite distinct, and for long there was no inter-marriage between them, those in the south considering themselves as somewhat superior to those in the north. Some people think that the name 'Christians of St. Thomas' is due to the confusing of this leader of one of the later additions to the church with the Apostle Thomas.

The king of the country around Cranganore at the time when Thomas of Cana arrived is said to have been Cheruman Perumal, although some writers

[1] Hough, *History of Christianity in India*, Vol. I, p. 94.

claim that the time when Perumal reigned was four and a half centuries later at the time when the third recorded Christian colony arrived. Day, in his *Land of the Perumals* (p. 43, note), says that Perumal reigned from A.D. 341–378 and that he then went on pilgrimage.[1] A Portuguese writer says the pilgrimage was to Mylapore (Madras). Another writer, Visscher, quoted by Mackenzie says: 'Like Charles V, the aged monarch, weary of the cares of state, retired to console his declining years with religion and solitude, and taking up his abode within the precincts of a sacred pagoda in the Cochin territory died full of years A.D. 352.' A note at the end of a manuscript volume in the British Museum dated A.D. 1604 states that it was then 'a thousand two hundred and fifty-eight years since Perumall died on the first of March.'[2] The deduction from this is that A.D. 346 was the date of his death. The exact date is open to dispute, but it is claimed that he gave a charter of privileges to Thomas of Cana, which T. K. Joseph describes as the Magna Charta of the St. Thomas Christians of Malabar. The charter was inscribed on three copper plates on one side only.

A Portuguese version of the inscription is to be found in the manuscript volume in the British Museum referred to above. The name or title of the king is given there as Cocurangon. It records how Thomas Cananeo arrived in a ship at a place called Carnellur

[1] G. T. Mackenzie, *Christianity in Travancore*, p. 59.
[2] Idem, p. 61.

on the seventh day of March before the full moon, and how the king to honour him gave him his own name, Cocurangon Cananeo, a town, and a number of other privileges.[1] Besides these he gave the right to collect five taxes to Thomas, and to his posterity and to the followers of his faith for ever.

Adrian Moens, the Dutch Governor of Cochin in A.D. 1781, quoted by T. K. Joseph in the *Asiatic Review*, Vol. XXI, p. 299 says: Mar Thomas 'having obtained great influence with the princes by means of his riches and wealth, secured for the Christians—who had chosen him as their head—great privileges and brought it about that they were not only ranked among the nobility of Malabar but were even preferred before the royal Nairs (which is the title given to the notables and noblemen of Malabar). They were also granted the privilege of trading all over the country, of building shops and churches, and certain honours which could be used by no one without special leave of the princes.'

Another account states that Mar Thomas bought the land on which the church at Cranganore stands from the king, and that he built on it not only a church but also a bazaar. The narrative is to the effect that the king (Perumal) while camping near a town called Parurpatanam 'wished one day to go a hunting, and went to the place where Cranganore now is, the whole of which was thicket. Thomas Cananeo, who had come from Babylonia, gave to the

[1] G. T. Mackenzie, *Christianity in Travancore*, p. 60.

said king a good sum of money and bought from him the whole of the thicket, and founded on it the church of St. Thomas and the bazaar. The land measured 264 elephant cubits.'

The account then goes on to state that, many years prior to the purchase of the ground by Mar Thomas, there was 'in the said place of Patanam a church and a big settlement of Christians, the date of its beginning being unknown, and still to-day the place where the church stood is called Paliparamb, i.e., church field, and near to it is another place Palimoe, i.e., church corner.'

An English translation of the Portuguese version of the charter is given in the *Indian Antiquary* (for July 1927), Vol. LVI, pp. 125–6, and also in G. T. Mackenzie's *Christianity in Travancore*, pp. 60, 61. The copper plates on which the charter was inscribed have long since disappeared, having, it is said, been taken to Portugal by the Franciscan brothers. Father Hosten, S. J., writing in the *Indian Antiquary* for August 1927, believes that the plates are now either in the 'Torre de Tombo' of Lisbon or in some old Franciscan monastery in Portugal.

The Malabar Christians of Tevalikare in A.D. 1599 complained to Archbishop Menezes about the loss of the Cranganore, copper plates, meaning those given to Thomas of Cana, and Francisco Roz, Bishop of Cranganore, writing in A.D. 1604, says, 'The last emperor of Malabar, called Xaram Perumal, was the one who gave land for a church and a settlement to the St. Thomas Christians,

and great privileges, as is seen from their *ollas*, the copper original of which was taken to Portugal by the 'Religious' of St. Francis, a copy of them remaining here.'[1] 'This Perumal' he adds, 'died on first March 1258 years ago'=A.D. 346. Father Lucena (*History of Life of P. Fr. de Xavier*, Lisboa 1600, p. 162, col. 2) speaks of 'tablets of metal which were found in India in one of the first three years that Father Master Francis was in India. They presented them to the Governor Martin Affonso de Sousa with the writing already spoiled by age as they were very old and the letters and the language were new to all. However, there was found a Jew (who, as such, is herein less suspect) who being curious of antiquity (sic) had great knowledge of it and of various languages. He, though with much trouble, translated it into Portuguese. It contained the grant which the then king made to the Apostle (?) St. Thomas of certain fields to build a temple and a church on.'[2]

The discovery of the tablets must, therefore, have taken place sometime in the years A.D. 1542 to 1545 —St. Francis Xavier came to India with Dom Martin Affonso de Sousa and arrived at Goa May 16th 1542.

[1] Three copper plates on which the charter given by Cheruman Perumal was also said to be inscribed are stated to have been in the possession of the Christians of Quilon as late as A.D. 1758. This may possibly be the copy referred to above. A Sanscrit version of the inscription on these is said to have been given to a French traveller by the bishop of Verapoly in the year mentioned.—G. T. Mackenzie, *Christianity in Travancore*, p. 61.

[2] *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. LVI. pp. 124, 125 and 149.

Dom Affonso governed for three years and four months, his successor leaving Lisbon March 28th, 1545.

Milne Rae raises doubts as to (1) the visit of Pantaenus to India and (2) the influx of new blood into the Syrian church under the leadership of Knai Thomas.[1] He says that 'as a matter of fact there was at the date in question no church in Malabar at all.' His assumption is entirely without foundation. Apart altogether from other considerations to which reference has already been made which indicate a very strong probability that, whether planted originally by St. Thomas the Apostle or by some one else, Christianity had as a matter of fact reached South India in the very early centuries, there are two additional arguments both of which tend to support the view that in A.D. 345 there were numbers of Christians resident there.

There is firstly the fact that at that time the Christians in Persia were being scattered abroad as the result of the great persecution which began in A.D. 339 under Sapor II and lasted for forty years. It does not require very much imagination to assume that some of the refugees were as likely as not to find their way to South India by the various trade routes. This would explain why Knai Thomas brought with him not only clergy but other settlers as well. Even to-day there is a considerable section of the Syro-Malabar Christians known as 'Suddists'

[1] Milne Rae, *Syrian Church in India*, p. 336.

who claim to be the descendants of these emigrant Syrians of the fourth century.[1]

Secondly, there is the fact that in A.D. 523, nearly one hundred and eighty years later, Cosmas found a strong community of Nestorian Christians already there. If they were not there in A.D. 345 and did not arrive in that year, when did they arrive, and how is it that we have not even a suggestion of any infusion of new blood between A.D. 345 and 522? Was there any other circumstance equally, or more likely to cause such an inflow than the persecution mentioned?

Cosmas in his *Christian Topography* refers to strong Christian communities as existing in his time not only in south-west India but in other parts as well.[2] He himself was a Nestorian, and speaks of these Indian Christians as having a bishop appointed from Persia. This shows their close connection with the church in Persia and justifies one in assuming that they had inherited much of their spiritual fervour from the Christians of that country.[3] Incidentally it indicates that as regards doctrine they held by the decrees of the 'Council of Nicea' which were accepted by the Nestorians generally. It is scarcely likely that any report of the Nestorian controversy, which began eighty-six years later than A.D. 345, had even reached them when Cosmas arrived.

[1] *Catholic Directory of India, Burma and Ceylon* (1925), p. 246.
[2] Cosmas, *Christian Topography*, Hakluyt Society, Intr., p. 9.
[3] Idem, p. 119 and p. 365.

The Syrian Christians of Travancore claim that they were in possession of the Syriac version of the scriptures even prior to the 'Council of Nicea,' and Buchanan in his *Christian Researches* is inclined to think that may be so as some of their MSS. are certainly very ancient.[1] The character used is Estrangelo Syriac, and the words of every book are numbered.

In addition to the inflow from Persia, others also may have helped in the proclamation of the gospel in these distant regions. The story of one such contribution has come down to us. The inhabitants of the interior of India are said to have been converted to Christianity during the reign of Constantine the Great or soon after, and a story explaining how this was brought about is told by Rufinus, A.D. 330–410, and repeated by various other writers. The story is as follows:

A Christian named Meropius having heard about India was fired with the desire to visit it. He accordingly set out, taking with him two youths related to him named Frumentius and Oedesius. When about to return, he was attacked by the natives of the place to which he had gone, and all on board the vessel with the exception of the two youths, were put to death. They were taken and presented to the king of the country, who was so pleased with them that he made Frumentius his secretary and Oedesius his cup-bearer. Just before his death

[1] Hough, *History of Christianity in India*, Vol. I, pp. 61, 62.

he gave them their liberty, but the queen entreated them to undertake the government of the country during the minority of the young prince. This they did. At the same time they enquired from merchants whether there were any other Christians there, and being told there were, they sent for them and counselled and encouraged them in every way. Many of those who heard their message and saw their example became Christians, and the number continued to increase during the whole of the time that Frumentius was at the head of affairs. When the young king attained his majority, Frumentius and his brother Oedesius, much to the grief of the queen and those associated with her, sailed for home.

Oedesius hastened to Tyre where their parents lived, but Frumentius proceeded to Alexandria and reported the whole matter to Athanasius who was then bishop. The latter thereupon begged Frumentius to return to India to minister to those who were already Christians, as well as to others who might be gathered into the Christian fold. He was accordingly ordained and returned to India for this purpose in A.D. 356, and was a successful minister of the gospel, winning many converts to Christianity.

Rufinus claims to have received the story from Oedesius the brother of Frumentius. Here again doubts have been thrown on the place, since it is known that one named Frumentius was bishop of Axum, the capital of Abyssinia; but as to this, Baronius, the martyrologist, holds that there were two bishops named Frumentius, one of whom had

his see in Abyssinia and the other in India proper, an explanation which is at least conceivable. [1]

The next event of importance in the history of the Syrian church after the visit of Cosmas to India in A.D. 522 was the arrival in the latter part of the eighth century of a second reinforcement from the West, followed fifty years later by a third from the same quarter. The Census report for A.D. 1901 gives the year A.D. 745 as the date of the first of these later reinforcements.[2] The authority quoted is a record kept by the Syrian kattanars. Hough is of opinion that the date should be some years after A.D. 780,[3] but according to Burnell, the writer of an article on Pahlawi inscriptions in South India, it could not have been later than A.D. 774, as in that year king Vira Raghava Chakravarti granted certain privileges, recorded on a copper plate still in existence, to one Iravi Cortan of Cranganore, as representing the Christian community there.[4] The king at the same time conferred on him the title of manigramam [5] and raised him to the position of sovereign merchant of Kerala. The recognition of Iravi Cortan as

[1] Hough, *History of Christianity in India*, Vol. I, p. 65.
[2] *Travancore Census*, 1901.
[3] Hough, *History of Christianity in India*, Vol. I, p. 94.
[4] Milne Rae, *Syrian Church in India*.

[5] K. N. Daniel in the *Indian Antiquary* for 1924, pp. 185–196 is of opinion that manigramam is equivalent to manigramakaran, and that it was a title of honour and not the name of a village as Burnell thought. He further points out that the name manigramam at a later date was applied to a particular community, as for example the chetties or merchant class, and that the Christians as a whole were at one time similarly designated. The probability, therefore, is that Iravi Cortan was given the title manigramam, not in his private capacity but as head of the community which he represented.

'sovereign merchant' of Kerala is probably the explanation of the tradition referred to by Neale that the Christians finally threw off the yoke of the pagan government and elected a king from among themselves.[1]

The third colony referred to is said to have arrived at Quilon in A.D. 822 under the leadership of Mar Sapor and Mar Peroz. Mar Sapor is evidently a corruption of Mar Sabr, the full name being Moran or Muravan Sabr Isho—Our Lord Sabrisho.[2] The arrival of these latest reinforcements is referred to in another charter of privileges engraved on five sheets of copper originally fastened together by a ring.

The purport of the inscription is that, in the fifth year of his reign, King Sthanu Ravi authorized the grant of a piece of land and certain other privileges to Muravan Sabr Isho, the founder of the city of Quilon, for the benefit of the Tarasin church (Tarisapalli as it is called). The year when Quilon was founded is given as A.D. 825. The whole question is discussed at considerable length in Vol. II, p. 60ff of the *Travancore Archæological Series*. The writer of the article there is of opinion that the five plates are not one homogeneous whole, but consist of two separate documents, both, however, relating to the same subject. The first of these is practically complete and is inscribed on both sides of plate one and on one side of plate two of the series. (The other

[1] Neale, *History of the Holy Eastern Church*, Vol. I, pp. 146, 147.
[2] *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. X, p. 498.

side of the latter is blank). The inscription begins with the name of the donor, King Tanu Iravi-Sthanu Ravi, and the year of his reign. Then follows a number of concessions and privileges secured for the church by Muravan Sabr Isho. The second document begins abruptly as if it were the continuation of something that had gone before. It mentions in detail further privileges given to the church authorities. These are inscribed on both sides of plates three and four. The writing on these and also that on the first two plates is in old Tamil. The inscription on plates three and four, however, concludes in each case with a few letters in ' some sort of Nagari ' or Grantha characters, supposed to be the signatures of the donors, or perhaps of those who wrote the charter. Plate five is also written on both sides, but the writing on it is in Pahlawi, Arabic with Kufic characters and four signatures in Hebrew, presumably the names of those who witnessed the deed.[1]

These five plates, together with the one given to Iravi Cortan fifty years previously, were in A.D. 1530 deposited by Mar Jacob, the then metropolitan of the Syrian church, in the Portuguese factory at Cochin as security, it is said, for a sum of money advanced to him by the Portuguese. There they were completely lost sight of until A.D. 1806, when they were rediscovered by Colonel Macaulay the British Resident, and handed over by him for safe

[1] *Travancore Archæological Series*, Vol. II, p. 60 ff.

keeping to the Syrian Church Seminary at Kottayam.[1] Later the first and fifth of the five plates were again lost sight of, and only three remained at Kottayam. After much searching the other two were found in the palace of the Mar Thoma metropolitan at Tiruvella. And thus it happens that at the present time plates one and five of the series are in the possession of the Mar Thoma Christians at Tiruvella, while plates two, three and four are with the Jacobite metropolitan at Kottayam.

Photo-engravings of the complete set are given in Vol. II of the *Travancore Archæological Series* referred to above. The date ascribed there to the document is the ninth or early part of the tenth century. The dates arrived at by Dr. Burnell, for the Iravi Cortan tablet and the charter just referred to, are A.D. 774 and A.D. 824 respectively, but Mr. Nagam Aiya, writing in the *Travancore State Manual*, Vol. I, p. 125, questions this and holds that the correct dates are A.D. 230 and A.D. 321. Against Mr. Nagam Aiya and in favour of Dr. Burnell's conclusion, however, is firstly the fact that the whole of the writing on the Iravi Cortan tablet and the major part of that on the Sthanu Ravi Gupta tablets is in old Tamil and a portion of the remainder in Kufic characters. But the earliest extant records of Tamil writing do not go further back than the middle of the eighth

[1] Mackenzie, *Christianity in Travancore*, pp. 7, 62.

century A.D.[1] and Kufic dates only from the Muhammadan era, the date of the oldest known Kufic inscription being A.D. 693.[2] Secondly, the earlier dates do not synchronise with any event that would account for an exodus of Christians from Persia at that time. The later do.

For these reasons it seems quite evident that the dates arrived at by Dr. Burnell are more likely to be correct than those claimed by Mr. Nagam Aiya.

If the arrivals in A.D. 345 were the result or the outcome of the persecution under Sapor II, as they probably were, these later additions were in all probability stimulated, to some extent at least, by the persecutions that the Christians had to undergo at the hands of the Muhammadan rulers of Persia, where, at that time, the Muhammadans were completely in the ascendant.

The Christians of south-west India were already an important community, socially and politically, and these new additions would tend to add to their importance. Neale says that the Christians ranked next to the Royal family, were allowed to ride on elephants—a privilege otherwise reserved exclusively for royalty—and were placed on terms of equality with the Nairs (next to the Brahmins the highest caste in that part of India).[3] They were even independent of

[1] *Ency. Brit*, ninth Ed., Vol. XXIII, p. 43, and Vol. XIII, p. 117.

[2] There are a number of pieces of bone in the Arabic museum at Cairo on which are inscribed quotations from the Qurán, in Kufic characters. Even if these are the originals of the quotations, however, they only antedate the inscription referred to by sixty or seventy years.

[3] Neale, *History of the Holy Eastern Church*, Vol. I, p. 146.

heathen officials and were governed by their bishops in civil as well as in ecclesiastical affairs.[1] In proportion, however, as they advanced in worldly prosperity their spiritual and missionary fervour diminished. Recognized practically as a separate but superior closed caste, it is scarcely to be wondered at that in course of time they came to imitate their Hindu neighbours in caste regulations, with regard to such matters as diet, avoidance of pollution, etc.

Their spiritual decadence, according to native tradition, was hastened by the revival of the worship of Siva, through the preaching of the celebrated Hindu ascetic Manicavasakar, who lived somewhere about the tenth century, and under whose influence numbers of so-called Christians relapsed into Hinduism.[2] Even prior to this, however, the church had become torpid and as a missionary force had ceased to exist.

For the next five hundred years the history of the Syrians of south-west India is practically a blank.

In the thirteenth century, John de Monte Corvino visited India and baptized a number of people. In the fourteenth century, or later, Jordanus a Dominican arrived and remained for some time. In his book 'Mirabilia' he describes his mission and the hardships he and his party endured, not from the Nestorian Christians who received them kindly, but from the Saracens who opposed and killed some of them, though the Nestorians were unmolested.

[1] *Travancore Archæological Series*, Vol. II, pp. 80, 84.
[2] Richards, *The Indian Christians of St. Thomas*, p. 6 ff.

The fact that the Christians of those early days were not merely tolerated but encouraged and honoured by their heathen rulers, while dangerous to their spiritual wellbeing, is, at the same time, testimony to the fact that they were neither vicious nor disaffected characters, and Neale's description of the state of the church on the arrival of the Portuguese probably applies with equal truth to the ninth century. 'The Christians,' he says, 'were easily distinguished from the others by their superior grace.'[1]

Although divided into northern and southern sections, they were on terms of the utmost goodwill with one another. They were noted for their industry, natural ability, the elegance of their diction and their respect for parents, elders and clergy. The men were always armed, but quarrels were few and murders never heard of. As a general rule, they were rich and possessed a considerable number of slaves whom they treated with the utmost kindness and consideration. They were much employed as merchants and their honour and liberality were acknowledged by all. They were very abstemious, seldom tasting either meat or wine, and lived almost entirely on rice and milk. They did not use images but held the cross in great veneration. They were particular and devout in their Sabbath attendance and at Communion, but not as a matter of obligation. The priests were allowed to marry, and their wives

[1] Neale, *History of the Holy Eastern Church*, Vol. I, p. 148.

were distinguished by a silver or golden cross worn round the neck.

The Portuguese arrived in India in A.D. 1500. During the time they were in Malabar they ignorantly burnt all the records of the St. Thomas congregations as heretical.[1] But for this, it would have been easier to fill up the blanks in the history of a church that has existed so long, and, incidentally, to have learned much that would have been both interesting and instructive.

With the Portuguese came the Franciscan brothers, the first Roman Catholics to begin regular mission work in India. When they reached Malabar they found a church already in existence and under the care of Nestorian bishops of whom there were four. These were Mar John and Mar Thomas ordained A.D. 1490, and Mar Yahb Alaha and Mar Jacob ordained A.D. 1503.[2] The last of the four, Mar Jacob, died in A.D. 1549. A fifth name mentioned is that of Mar Denha.

The Franciscans do not seem to have caused much trouble to the existing church, and for fifty years there is no record of any difficulty having arisen between the two bodies.

It was different, however, when the Jesuits under Francis Xavier came. They arrived in A.D. 1542, but it was not until A.D. 1551 that the Portuguese governors began to bring pressure to

[1] Neale, *History of the Holy Eastern Church*, Vol. I, p. 148.
[2] *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. X, p. 469.

bear on the Syrian Christians with a view to their accepting Roman Catholic doctrine and practice. They compelled the native princes to persecute the Christians, and by means of confiscations, imprisonments and other hardships to force them to seek reconciliation with Rome.[1] The harshness of the Portuguese, however, failed to accomplish entirely the end in view and reacted against the sometimes unwise zeal of the Jesuit missionaries. To still further carry out their purpose they sought to cut off the supply of bishops from Persia, either by compassing their death while still on the way, or by imprisoning them for life after their arrival. To some extent they succeeded in this, but, notwithstanding all efforts to prevent them, three Nestorian bishops managed to reach the Malabar coast. These were Mar Jacob, ordained by Ebed Jesu, the successor of Sulaka referred to later, whose term of office began in A.D. 1563, Mar Abraham, ordained by the patriarch Mar Simon, who was metropolitan from some time in A.D. 1565–67 until A.D. 1597,[2] and third, Mar Simon, ordained also probably by the patriarch of that name, who exercised the duties of his office for a short period in A.D. 1578.[3] The first two, being afraid of the Portuguese, dissembled and appeared outwardly as Roman Catholics. Historians agree, however, that this was not real and that secretly they remained true Nestorians. Mar Joseph was twice taken prisoner and sent to Rome, and

[1] W. W. Hunter, *The Indian Empire*, p. 242.
[2] Hough, *History of Christianity in India*, Vol. I, p. 250.
[3] Idem, Vol. I, p. 283.

although he managed to escape and return to Malabar after his first imprisonment he died at Rome during his second incarceration.

Mar Abraham was taken prisoner once and sent to Rome but escaped, and after his return was Nestorian metropolitan in Malabar until his death in A.D. 1597. Mar Simon also was taken prisoner soon after his ordination, but failed to escape and died in captivity.

Before Mar Abraham died he appointed one George as Archdeacon, and the latter governed the church from the time of Mar Abraham's death until A.D. 1599. In that year Archbishop Menezes determined to convert the whole Syrian church to Rome, and called a Synod which met in the church of Diamper, now known as Udaiyamperoor, a village in the extreme north of modern Travancore on the boundary line between Cochin and Travancore States. The church still exists and has recently had a copper plate with a commemorative inscription placed over the gateway leading to it. The numbers present at the Synod were one hundred and fifty-three kattanars or priests and six hundred and sixty laymen, including Portuguese notables. The majority acquiesced in the proposals of Archbishop Menezes, compelled thereto 'by the sheer might of his overpowering personality,' and submitted, at least nominally, to the headship of Rome.

How many persons the majority represented we are not told, but 'thirty thousand refused to abandon the errors of Nestorius or to submit to the one

catholic apostolic church.'[1] The latter probably consisted mainly of those who dwelt in the hills and were thus less accessible to Portuguese methods of persuasion and able the more easily to assert their independence.

Those who submitted continued to be reckoned as Roman Catholics until A.D. 1653. They found the rule of the Jesuits very harsh and grew more and more restless under it. Not until the advent of the Dutch, however, were they in a position to give expression to their feelings in the matter. The defeat of the Portuguese by the Dutch gave them the opportunity they desired, and at a great gathering held at the Coonen Cross,[2] Matancheri, Cochin, in the year mentioned they renounced their allegiance to the Portuguese and pledged themselves never again to 'acknowledge Portuguese bishops.' The immediate cause of the revolt is stated to have been the murder by the Portuguese of a Nestorian bishop named Mar Attila, who was seized on his way to Malabar carried prisoner to Cochin, and taken thence to Goa where he was burned at the stake.[3] 'The Jesuits were incapable of defending the power which they had abused. The arms of forty thousand Christians were pointed

[1] Strickland and Marshall. *Catholic Missions in South India*, p. 34.

[2] Coonen means bent and probably indicates that the large granite cross usually found in front of each church was in the case of Matancheri not quite perpendicular. It is said that with a view to enabling a larger number to touch the cross when abjuring allegiance to Rome long ropes were tied to it and those who touched the ropes were considered as having touched the cross.

[3] Day, *Land of the Perumals*, p. 235.

against their falling tyrants, and the Indian archdeacon assumed the character of a bishop till a fresh supply of episcopal gifts and Syrian missionaries could be obtained from the patriarch of Babylon.'[1] In the absence of a bishop he was ordained metropolitan by the laying on of hands of twelve of the kattanars or priests.[2] Out of a total of 200,000 persons only four hundred (whether individuals or families is not stated) remained true to their Roman Catholic faith.

To remedy the disastrous results of the Coonen Cross revolt the Pope of Rome in A.D. 1657 sent a number of Carmelite priests with a Carmelite bishop at their head to take the place of the Jesuits. Under their persuasion eighty-four churches out of one hundred and sixteen, or more than two-thirds of the total of those who had apostatized, recanted and returned to the Roman Catholic fold. The descendants of those who acquiesced in the decrees of the Synod of Diamper were thus divided into two main sections—those who, although they had seceded at Coonen Cross, afterwards accepted the teaching of the Carmelite fathers and returned to Roman Catholicism rejoining the four hundred who did not secede, and those who not only seceded but continued firm in their secession and are now designated as Jacobites for reasons which will be referred to later.

[1] *Bury's Gibbon*, Vol. V, 152.
[2] *State Manual of Travancore*, p. 185.

Practically all historians on this subject agree in stating that the Coonen Cross secessionists reverted to Nestorianism, but nothing is said as to whether the thirty-two churches remaining steadfast united with the descendants of the thirty thousand who refused to accept the decrees of the Synod of Diamper or not. The probability is they did not. The fact that the latter were probably hill men while the others were dwellers on the plains and on the coast was a dividing factor which was not likely to be quite overcome before the Coonen Cross section had gone over to Jacobitism. Although Cochin was taken by the Dutch in A.D. 1653 the Portuguese still retained Goa and, with it as their headquarters, they were able effectively to prevent intercourse by sea between the non-catholic Christians of the Malabar Coast and the patriarch of Babylon. The result was that the Coonen Cross secessionists were unable to obtain bishops of their own persuasion from the West between A.D. 1653 and 1665. In the latter year Mar Gregory, Jacobite metropolitan of Jerusalem, sent it is said by the patriarch of Antioch, managed to reach Malabar and was welcomed by the Christians there. Later on he was joined by other Jacobites with the result that the secessionists ere long accepted Jacobite leadership and were thereafter designated Jacobites. Reference will be made to them again in a later chapter, but the concern in the meantime is with the Nestorian remnant, the descendants of those who refused to approve the decrees of the Synod of Diamper. That such a

remnant has continued from A.D. 1599 and A.D. 1665 to the present time has been clearly shown in very elaborate judgments by (1) the District Judge of Trichur and (2) the Chief Court of Cochin, in a dispute known as the Trichur Church Case.

The litigation connected with the case extended over a period of fully twelve years. There was thus ample time for every aspect of the matter to be gone into and all available documentary and other evidence to be produced. It is admitted by both parties, that for more than two hundred years after A.D. 1665, in addition to the Jacobite Thomas Christians and the Romo-Syrians, there existed a third section called Syro-Chaldeans who were Nestorians prior to A.D. 1599. Just where they came in originally was not very clear, but it seemed to be assumed that when the majority of those who seceded from Roman Catholicism at Coonen Cross went over to Jacobitism a remnant remained true and continued to assert their independence of either Jacobites or Roman Catholics. The difficulty as to their origin would have been more easily solved if the fact mentioned by Strickland and Marshall that there were thirty thousand dissenters from the decree of the Synod of Diamper had not been lost sight of. That doctrine and dogma had ceased to weigh very heavily with the Coonen Cross secessionists is evident from the ease with which they accepted Jacobite teaching from the first Jacobite who happened to come along. That the origin of the Syro-Chaldeans, the present-day

Nestorians, goes further back than to the Coonen Cross thus becomes increasingly evident.

The first Nestorian bishop to reach Malabar from the West after A.D. 1653 of whom we have any record was Mar Simon. Beyond the fact that he arrived in A.D. 1701 we are told nothing about him. The next, Mar Gabriel, dates from A.D. 1705 and continued there until A.D. 1730 or 1731.[1] His influence was so great among the Uniat Syrians, as those who had accepted the headship of Rome were called, that at one time they were on the point of renouncing Rome and attaching themselves to him.

From A.D. 1731 to A.D. 1781 there is no further direct reference to any one, but in the latter year the Dutch governor Moens wrote : 'The religious tenets of those Christians or more particularly of their bishops and priests are those of Nestorius, and of Eutyches, whence the first party are called Nestorians and the second Eutychians or Jacobites.'[2] 'These conflicting religious opinions' he adds, 'predominate in turn according to the arrival of new bishops who are Nestorian or Eutychean.'

In A.D. 1787 and again in A.D. 1813 Nestorian churches in Cochin are referred to, and the Roman Catholic divine Paoli, writing in A.D. 1796, said there were then sixty-four Nestorian and thirty-two Jacobite churches in the States of Travancore and Cochin.[3] How many persons each church represented we are not told.

[1] Richter, *History of Indian Missions*, p. 90.
[2] Galetti, *The Dutch in Malabar*, p. 101 ff.
[3] Day, *Land of the Perumalls*, p. 248.

What happened after that is not very clear. When Dr. Buchanan visited Malabar in A.D. 1806 he found that while the doctrines of the Syrians were few in number they were pure and agreed in essential points with those of the church of England. On the other hand Bishop Middleton who visited Travancore ten years later (a month before the arrival of the first C. M. S. Missionaries) wrote that the Syrians 'acknowledged seven sacraments, worshipped the Virgin Mary whom they hailed as 'mother of God' and had auricular confession and solitary masses which were among the most valued privileges of the clergy, although the ordinary lay folk knew little of their religion.'[1]

How are we to reconcile these apparently contradictory statements? May it not have been that as the result of the terrible persecution of A.D. 1809, referred to elsewhere, the leading members of the Nestorian community and many of their clergy sealed their testimony with their blood? Left shepherdless, the spiritual life of the rank and file of the community may have so deteriorated that they found it comparatively easy to accept such forms of worship and doctrinal beliefs as those held and practised by the Jacobites on the one hand and the Roman Catholics on the other. The arrival of the C. M. S. Missionaries and the reforms introduced by them with the concurrence of the newly ordained metropolitan, Mar Dionysius III (A.D. 1817), may have to some

[1] Hunt, *The Anglican Church in Travancore and Cochin*, p. 45.

extent satisfied the longings and met the immediate needs of those to whom Jacobite and Roman Catholic observances and doctrinal beliefs were unattractive and irksome, and at the same time prepared the way for that wider reform which was bound to come as the result of the deepened spirituality brought about by the teaching of the English missionaries.

It is also conceivable that those with whom Dr. Buchanan conversed were chiefly Nestorians, while those whom Bishop Middleton met may have been mostly Jacobites.

In the Census of A.D. 1911 the Nestorians in Cochin, or Syro-Chaldeans as they are called, are returned as numbering 12,155. The numbers in 1921 are much less and the Roman Catholics correspondingly more, due apparently to a mistake in taking the census, although a few may actually have gone over to Rome during the decade. The Syro-Chaldeans themselves hold that the Census returns are wrong and claim that their community in Cochin State at the present time numbers not less than ten thousand.

They are not returned separately in Travancore, but in different parts of that State, more particularly in the hills, there are said to be numbers of Syro-Chaldeans. Some of them, not only in Travancore, but in Cochin, have in recent years joined the Mar Thoma Christians, referred to later, but others apparently continue to be independent and have their own churches. In some cases there may have been a certain amount of oscillation due to pressure of circumstances, at one time inclining to Roman

Catholicism, or Jacobitism, and again turning towards their ancient Nestorianism. Such cases, although probably exceptional, were not confined to the Syro-Chaldeans.

There is a Jacobite Suddist church near Tiruvalla in North Travancore. Some time ago the Roman Catholics were accused of having tried to persuade the congregation to join them by the promise of a new church and other material benefits. The kattanar, or priest in charge, agreed and actually went over. The old church was closed and a new church erected, but with one single exception the people refused to follow the kattanar into Roman Catholicism. After a time he returned to his flock, who gladly received him back and the closed building was re-opened. The new Roman Catholic church is being used as a place of worship by a Roman Catholic fisher community some distance away who had previously no church of their own.

The Syro-Chaldeans, few as they are numerically compared with some of the other sections, are not without encouragement. They still retain their ecclesiastical connection with the Nestorian patriarch of Babylon, and their present metropolitan Mar Timotheus is seeking to introduce reforms which will tend to the spiritual well-being of the community.

Note.—Yohannan in the appendix to his book *The death of a Nation* gives the official title of the Patriarch of Babylon from A.D. 1559 to 1738 as Mar Elias. This is misleading. In A.D. 1551 on the death of Simon Bar Mama, there was a dispute as to the succession between his nephew Simon Denha and one Sulaka.[1] The mountaineers supported Denha although a section of them around Urumiah preferred

1 *Judgment of District Judge*, p. 8.

a distant relative. Sulaka was unable to secure the support of the requisite number of metropolitans and accordingly went to the Pope of Rome and obtained ordination from him. There were thus for a short period actually three patriarchs contemporary and all claiming the title of patriarch of Babylon. After some time the patriarch preferred by the Urumians died, and his followers transferred their allegiance to Mar Denha whose headquarters were in Qudshanis. He retained the title Mar Simon, while Sulaka, whose headquarters were at Mosul, took the title Mar Elias. Although ordained by the Pope, Mar Elias I did not become a Roman Catholic but continued a Nestorian, as did all his successors until A.D. 1778 when a dispute again took place. This time it was as to the succession to the Mosul patriarchate. One of the candidates was again favoured by the Pope, and Roman Catholic writers claim that from this date onward Mosul acknowledged his headship but this is denied by others who assert that not until A.D. 1878 when the vacancy caused by the death of Oudo was filled by a nominee of the Pope, did Mosul as a Nestorian patriarchate cease to exist. Others again hold that although Roman supremacy was not recognized in A.D. 1778 it was in A.D. 1826, when Mar Hanna, they claim, acknowledged the authority of the Pope ; but this lacks confirmation.

The Pope however, has all along been anxious to secure the adhesion of the eastern patriarchates to Rome, and his hope of bringing this about through Mar Elias I having failed, Pope Innocent XI, more than a hundred years later, ordained Mar Joseph, the Nestorian metropolitan at Diarbekir, as patriarch with his seat at Diarbekir itself. When Mar Joseph died in A.D.1693 he was succeeded by Mar Joseph II, who under the authority of Clement XI took the title ' patriarch of Babylon.' His successors continued to use the title until A.D. 1826 when as stated above the patriarch Hanna of Mosul is alleged to have become reconciled to Rome and the necessity for a separate patriarchate in Diarbekir came to an end.[1]

Badger however in *Nestorians and their ritual*, pp. 160–1, mentions A.D. 1778 as the date when Mar Hanna went over to Rome. It is difficult to say which of the two dates is correct. But whatever any particular individual may have done there is no general agreement that Mosul as a patriarchate became consistently subservient to Rome prior to A.D. 1878.

The patriarch of the Nestorians proper continued to have his headquarters at Qudshanis, with the title Mar Simon. The present patriarch, Ishai Simon, succeeded to the patriarchate about A.D. 1919–20 as Mar Simon XXI, when only twelve years of age.

1 *Appeal Judgment*, p. ii.

CHAPTER VI

NESTORIAN MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE IN FURTHER ASIA

Under this heading are included present-day East and West Turkestan, Mongolia and the south eastern parts of Siberia. China will be dealt with separately.

The distances of these countries from the head-quarters of the Nestorian Patriarch were so great and regular communication with him so difficult that the metropolitans were exempted from attendance at the general synods of the church, but were required instead to send a report on the state of their diocese to the Patriarch once every six years.[1]

While the name Mongol was unknown to Syriac writers until the Mongols swept over the whole of Asia and a large part of Europe, and conquered it with a rapidity unparalleled in the annals of history, the names Turk and Tartar were frequently met with at a much earlier date. The Hephtalite Huns and Turks have already been referred to in connection with king Kawad of Persia, and in a treatise called the *Synodicon Orientale* translated by J. B. Chabot we find the metropolitan of the Turks placed tenth in the list of metropolitans, taking precedence over those of Razikaye, Herat, Armenia, China and Java.[2]

[1] Mingana, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. IX, p. 320.
[2] Idem, p. 322.

The last was fifteenth in rank. In another list, probably of a later date, the order is reversed. China is fourteenth, India fifteenth, Samarkand twenty-first, the metropolitan of the Turks twenty-second, Khan Balik and Falik twenty-fifth, Tangut twenty-sixth and Kashgar and Nuakit twenty-seventh. Each metropolitan had, as already stated, from six to twelve suffragan bishops associated with him. The principal metropolitan sees in Further Asia were Samarkand, Kashgar, Khatai, Tangut and Khan Balik. Various dates are mentioned as the time when Samarkand was raised to the rank of a metropolitan see. The earliest is A.D. 410–415 but probably the correct period is A.D. 628–643. According to Ibn-at-Tayil, who died in A.D. 1043, Merv was elevated to the rank of a metropolitan see by the Patriarch Isaac (A.D. 399–410) whereas Herat, Samarkand, India and China were only raised to a similar status by the Patriarch Isho Yahb round about (A.D. 628–643).[1]

According to Rockhill, mention of the name Turk, as applied to the tribes of Central and Eastern Asia, is to be found in a book written about A.D. 557–581 and in the 'Syrian Chronicle' the word Turkaye (Turks) appears as a well-known name in A.D. 570–586. In the second half of the eighth century the Christian Uigur Turks were all powerful in Eastern Asia and had their capital at Karakoram.[2] Their king was known by the sobriquet Idi Kut

[1] Mingana *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. IX, p. 367.
[2] Howorth, *History of the Mongols* Vol. I, p. 21.

'Lord of the kingdom.' The earliest known date for the use of the word Tatar is A.D. 732.[1] An inscription bearing that date found on the river Orkhon includes the phrases Tokuz Tatar—the nine tribes of Tatars, and Otuz Tatar—the thirty tribes of Tatars.

The date when the Christian message was first carried to these Turco-Tatar tribes is uncertain, but it cannot have been later than the seventh century and may have been considerably earlier. Confirmation of the latter assumption is found in a new manuscript which has just been translated and edited by Dr. Mingana of the John Ryl ands Library, Manchester.

The manuscript is in the form of a letter purporting to have been sent by Mar Philoxenus, bishop of Mabbug, who lived in the early part of the sixth century, to Abu-Afr, military governor of Hirta of Numan.[2]

(Incidentally Abu-Afr is the name of one of the notables who suffered martyrdom at the taking of the town of Najran by Masruq, the Jewish king of Yemen, about the same time, and it is recorded that two presbyters from Hirta, Moses and Elias by name, were also among those who suffered. [3])

In the manuscript frequent reference is made to the Christian Turks. If the whole letter were written by Philoxenes it would indicate that these large Christian communities were already in existence in his day. Mingana, however, questions this, and inclines to the opinion—for reasons given—that the letter is composite and that the second part, which

[1] Mingana, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. IX, p. 364.
[2] Idem, p. 352.
[3] Moberg, *Book of the Himyarites*, p. CXVI.

deals particularly with the Christian Turks, was written later than the first part, probably about A.D. 730–790. Still the fact that there were so many, at least nominal, Christians, even at the later date, is fairly conclusive that the gospel must have reached them long prior to that time. Philoxenus is known to have been a staunch Jacobite and, whether written by him or not, the letter is quite evidently from the pen of a Jacobite. He tries to discredit Nestorianism and ignores the fact that these Christian Turks were Nestorians by choice, and not by force of circumstances and in doing so implies the insinuation that the Jacobites might, at least, claim a share in the honour of having carried the gospel to those far-off tribes. Mingana dismisses any such implied claim as having no historical foundation. The merit of having carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Turco-Tartar tribes of Central and Eastern Asia belongs entirely, he says, 'to the untiring zeal and the marvellous spiritual activities of the Nestorian church,' *the most missionary church that the world has ever seen.*[1] 'We cannot but marvel' he adds, 'at the love of God, of man, and of duty which animated those unassuming disciples of Christ . . . . who in utter disregard of all discomforts of the body and in the teeth of the strong opposition and terrible vengeance of the wizards of Shamanism and the mobeds of Zoroastrianism literally explored all the

[1] Mingana, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. IX, p. 347.

corners of the eastern globe "to sow in them the seed" of true religion as it was known to them.'

To render more plausible his disparagement of the Nestorians the writer of the manuscript makes use of an old legend which, while erroneously affirming the subordination of Kōke, as Seleucia Ctesiphon is called in the letter, to Antioch, professes to explain how the separation of the two came about. The legend appeared first, about the year A.D. 690, in a treatise by John of Phenek, which places the incident about the first half of the fourth century.[1] It is as follows: 'At a time preceding this the rights of the patriarchal see of Syria were transferred to the church of Kōke (Ctesiphon) in the east, on account of the enmity existing between the empires of the east and of the west which were at war every day. Many bishops were killed when repairing from here to there and from there to here, on account of the remoteness of the Patriarch. They accused them of being spies, while in reality they did it because of their thirst for the blood of the saints. And the Father Bishops, in grief for the murder of their colleagues, ordained that the Patriarch of the church of Kōke should have full jurisdiction over the bishops of the east according to the enactments of ecclesiastical canons.'

The introduction of this legend into the letter is one of the reasons for doubt as to whether Philoxenus was the author of the second part or some one else

[1] Mingana, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. IX, p. 362.

who lived at a much later period. If the first mention of the legend is about A.D. 690, it stands to reason that the part of the letter which refers to it was unlikely to have been written two hundred years earlier. It is in this part that the reference to the Christian Turks comes in. The period when they appear on the scene is during the Patriarchate of Acacius A.D. 485–496. It is stated that 'at that time some men from the Turks, who are Christians, came to Ctesiphon from the remote countries to elect a metropolitan for themselves and have him ordained, as was their wont, because it was in Ctesiphon that the consecration of their metropolitans used to take place,' showing that this was not the first time men from their country had come on a similar errand. On this occasion, however, it is said, they discovered that Acacius was not any longer under the jurisdiction of Antioch, as he had rebelled against the Patriarch there. At first they refused to proceed further with the purpose for which they had come and returned to their own country. But being unable to find any other means of accomplishing their object, they later came again to Ctesiphon and asked Acacius why he had ceased to recognize the authority of Antioch. He replied in the terms of the legend referred to above. Believing his words they carried out their purpose and accepted ordination at his hands for the metropolitan of their choice. 'And this custom is, we are told, handed down by them to the present day, because any time their bishop dies they come to the

Nestorians and take another to replace him from Ctesiphon.' The reference to Ctesiphon here fixes the date of the letter as certainly not later than A.D. 762, the date when the seat of the Patriarch of the Nestorians was removed to Baghdad. After disposing of the matter of the ordination the letter proceeds to give a description of the Turks and their customs and habits. 'These Christian Turks eat meat and drink milk.' 'All their habits are clean and their beliefs orthodox.' They wrote and read the Books of the Old and New Testaments in Syriac only, although reference has been made in another place to a Turkish script as well, but in their gatherings they translated the Syriac scriptures into the Turkish language 'that all their congregation may understand what is read.' These Christian Turks 'are true believers and God-fearing folk.' They dwell in tents and have no towns, villages or houses. They are very wealthy and are divided into large and strong clans who journey from place to place. And then comes the most important part of the narrative in which we are told that they had four great and powerful kings, evidently contemporaries, who lived at a considerable distance from each other. Their names are given as Gawirk, Girk, Tasahz and Langu. They were all called Tartars and the name of their country was Sericon, the name by which Ptolemy designated China. Each one of these kings is stated to have ruled over four hundred thousand families. Computing five persons to each family, this means a total community of two

million people under each king, all, or almost all, subject to a rule based upon the teachings and precepts of the gospel of Christ. It is a marvellous record and one which it would be difficult to beat. The dwelling place of these Christian Turks was five days distant from Karakoram which is spoken of as 'the border town,' and whose king as stated already was known by the sobriquet Idi Kut, or 'Lord of the kingdom.'

Mingana is of opinion that these four kings may have been the heads, or Khakans, of the four powerful Turco-Tartar Christian confederacies known as the Keraits, Uigurs, Naimans and Merkites, or if the Merkites were considered doubtful then the Uriyangakit tribe might be substituted.[1] The objection to this is that the tribes we have been dealing with, are said not only to have been Christian but to have had Christian kings in the seventh and eighth centuries or even earlier. There may have been, and probably were, Christians among the Keraits then too, but the first reference to a Christian king of the Keraits does not occur until the beginning of the eleventh century.

The incident referred to is stated to have taken place in A.D. 1007. One day, when out hunting in the high mountains, the king lost his way in the snow and almost despaired of finding it again, when suddenly a man appeared to him and promised to lead him to safety, which he did. He gave his name

[1] Mingana, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. IX, p. 352.

as Mar Sergius, and besought the king most earnestly to become a Christian.[1] Another version of the same story is to the effect that the man who appeared unto him said 'If you believe in Christ I will show you the way.'[2] The king assenting to this was directed on his way. When he reached his camp the king at once sent for certain Christian merchants who were there and asked to be instructed in the Christian faith.[3] He received the gospel at their hands and joined with them in the worship of Christ. He then sent a messenger to the nearest metropolitan asking him either to come himself or to send preachers and teachers to baptize him and his people, adding that there were 200,000 who believed with him. Presbyters and deacons were sent who instructed and baptized the king and all his people. From this it is evident that there were Nestorian Christian merchants living among the Keraites prior to the baptism of the king and his people.[4] This no doubt explains the large accession that took place as soon as the king himself was convinced.

Howorth says that the evidence that the Keraits were Christians is most clear.[5] He quotes Rashid-ud-din, the Muhammadan historian of the Mongols, as saying, that 'the Keraits had their own rulers and professed the Christian faith.'

Not only were the Keraits Christians, but their territory and the neighbouring Chinese province of

[1] Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, III, ii, p. 485.
[2] Howorth, *History of the Mongols*, Vol. I, p. 543.
[3] Mingana, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. IX, p. 308.
[4] Idem, p. 486.
[5] Howorth, *History of the Mongols*, Vol. I, p. 542.

Kansu were apparently great strongholds of Nestorian Christianity, which was a very active faith in the north-west borders of China during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[1] Marco Polo tells us that the capital city of the Keraits, Karakoram, was in the territory of the Naimans.[2] The Nestorians had a church there in which Rubruck was permitted to officiate when he visited the place.

About the year A.D. 1143 the name of Prester or Presbyter John, a Christian king of the east, regarding whom many wonderful tales and legends have grown up, first reached Europe. Some of the stories told about him are undoubtedly legendary, but the general concensus of opinion is that there was such a person and that he probably exercised the office of presbyter as well as that of king. It is equally probable that the name became to some extent hereditary and, while that dynasty lasted, was handed down from father to son or successor. Yule gives several different versions of the story.

Howorth among others, would make him out to be the king of the Keraits about whose conversion to Christianity mention has just been made.[3] Oppert, on the other hand, claims that he was the king or Gurkhan of the Kara Kitai.

This is the opinion held by Otto of Freiningen, who states that in A.D. 1145 he was told by the Syrian bishop of Gabala (Jibal) south of Laodicea, that one John, king and priest from the Far East, had

[1] Howorth, *History of the Mongols*, Vol. I, p. 543.
[2] Idem, p. 545. [3] Idem, p. 534.

waged war against the Samiardes and captured Echbatana their capital after a battle lasting three days.[1] He was said to belong to the ancient race of the Magi who are mentioned in the gospel, and to rule over the same people as they did.

Otto identifies this battle with the great defeat sustained by the Sultan Sanjar at the hands of the Gurkhan of the Kara Kitai, the said Gurkhan being, he says, no other than Prester John. Howorth questions the reliability of Otto's narrative.

Gregorius Bar Hebraeus, called Abu'l-Faraj, who wrote during the reign of Argun Khan, agrees with Howorth in speaking of Prester John as king of the Keraits. He, however, goes further than Howorth and identifies Prester John with Unc Khan, and attributes his defection from the Christian faith to his marriage with a daughter of the Khan of the Kara Kitai, who according to Oppert, was himself the Prester John of that day.

The empire of the Kara Kitai, however, is said to have been founded only in A.D. 1125 on the overthrow by the Khan of the Kitan Empire in China, while the conversion of the king of the Keraits took place more than a century previous.

As against Oppert and Otto of Freiningen and in favour of Howorth's contention, is the letter supposed to have been sent by Prester John to the Emperor Alexis Comnenus, the date of which must have been prior to A.D. 1118 (see note at end of Chapter, pp. 165–6).

[1] Howorth, *History of the Mongols*, Vol. I, pp. 537, 545.

Yule is of opinion that the modern city of Koko Khotan, called in the middle ages Tsingchau, is on the site of Prester John's capital.[1]

Rubruck says that about the year A.D. 1098 there were certain Cathayans, known as Cara or Black Cathayans, who inhabited mountain pasture lands, and that in these same mountains there dwelt a Nestorian shepherd who was ruler of the tribe called Naimans, who themselves were Nestorian Christians. The country inhabited by these Naimans was in the neighbourhood of lake Baikal in the Siberian province of what is now called Transbaikalia, and in all likelihood extended also to the province of Irkutsk on the opposite side of the lake. The king of the whole country was called Con Cham. On his death he was succeeded by this Nestorian shepherd. The Nestorians called him Prester John.

The Prester John now mentioned is stated to have had a brother whose name was Unc or Ung, who dwelt on the other side of the mountains at a town called Karakoram, about three weeks distant, and who ruled over a people called Crit, Kerait, or Merkite. These people were Christians, but Unc himself was alleged to have abandoned Christianity and to have practised idolatry. There does not seem to be any confirmation of this assertion, but Yule expresses the hope that the story is true, since Unc Khan was scarcely a credit to the Christian profession as, in order to secure the sovereignty of the Keraits, he began his

[1] Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither*, Vol. III, p. 19.

career by murdering two of his brothers and several nephews.[1]

Beyond Prester John's territory were the pastures of the tribe known as the Moal, and of another poor tribe called Tatar. When king John died without an heir, his brother Unc proclaimed himself Khan. He became so wealthy and so strong that his flocks and herds spread even to the Moal, where he came into conflict with a Mongol chief named Temugin. Temugin at first fled, but afterwards in a great battle defeated Unc Khan and became king or khan of all the Tartars.[2] He afterwards (in A.D. 1206) took the name of Chenghiz or Jenghiz Khan, or Khan of the strong.[3] This was in the year A.D. 1203 so that there appears to be evidence to show that there had been at least one other Prester John between the first of that name and Unc Khan.

Next to the Keraits one of the most important Christian Turco-Tartar tribes was the Uigurs. They appear to have been converted to Christianity at an early date and to have exerted a strong Christian influence for a very long period. Even in Rubruck's day there were still Nestorians in all their towns.[4] An instance of the relationship of the Uigurs to Christianity, and of the important part played by Nestorians from China, is given in the history of two Uigur Nestorians, viz., Rabban bar

[1] Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither*, III, p. 25.
[2] Malcolm, *History of Persia*, Vol. I, p. 414.
[3] Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, III, ii, p. 486.
[4] Rockhill, *Rubruck's Journey to Tartary*, Hakluyt Edition, pp. 161, 141 ff.

Cauma, born at Khanbalik and ordained by Mar George, metropolitan of that town, and Marcus son of Bainiel, born at Keshang, A.D. 1245. While on a visit to his friend Cauma, Marcos was in turn ordained by Mar Nestorius, the successor of Mar George. In A.D. 1278 Cauma and Marcos determined to visit Jerusalem and travelled via Keshang, Tangut, Khotan, Kashgar, Talas, Khorassan, Tus and Azerbaijan, en route to Bagdad.[1] At Margha they met the Catholicos, Mar Denha, who gave them letters of introduction to officials in the Church in Palestine.

They visited Baghdad, Arbel, Mosul, Nisibis, Mardin, Gozart, and finally arrived at the monastery of St. Mar Michael of Tar'el, near Arbel, where they evidently purposed staying for a time. They were, however, summoned by the Patriarch, Mar Denha, who wished to send them on a mission to Abaka the Mongol sovereign of Persia. Denha had been compelled to leave Baghdad in A.D. 1268. He had retired first to Arbel and then to Ushnej in Azerbaijan, and was now anxious to obtain some favour from the king.

Denha had in A.D. 1279 ordained as metropolitan of China, Bar Kaliq, bishop of Tus in Khorassan. Bar Kaliq grew arrogant and was thrown into prison by Denha where he died. To replace him, Denha chose Rabban Marcos and ordained him metropolitan of Cathay under the name of Jaballaha. This was

[1] Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither*, III, p. 119 ff.

in A.D. 1280, Marcos Jaballaha being then thirty-five years of age. His friend Rabban Cauma was appointed visitor general of the churches. Mar Denha died at Baghdad on 24th February, A.D. 1281 before Jaballaha had left for his new see.

Owing to his knowledge of Mongolian, which apparently was at that time the language of the court or, at all events one of the court languages, Jaballaha was elected Patriarch in room of Mar Denha, his nomination being approved by Abaka, the viceroy of Persia. He was the third of the name to occupy the see of Seleucia-Ctesiphon. Ahmed the successor of Abaka, who died on 1st April A.D. 1282, was hostile to Jaballaha III, but was murdered 10th August, A.D. 1284.

Arghun, eldest son of Abaka, succeeded Ahmed and bestowed great honours on the Patriarch. Arghun was a clever and ambitious man and as he wished to conquer Palestine and Syria and was desirous of obtaining the goodwill of the Christian princes of Europe, in A.D. 1287 he selected Rabban Cauma as his ambassador to them, not only because he was a Christian but also on account of his linguistic gifts.

Cauma visited Constantinople and then proceeded to Naples and Rome, where he was received by the College of Cardinals, the Pope Honorius IV having just died (3rd April, A.D. 1287). Questions were put to him by Cardinal Jerome of Ascoli, who became pope as Nicholas IV on 20th February, A.D. 1288. Passing through Tuscany and Genoa, Cauma

reached Paris and was well received by Philip the Fair, who was then king.

Going on to Gascony he met the King of England who was equally agreeable. Returning to Rome he had an audience with Nicholas and then proceeded to the court of Arghun at Baghdad. He died at Marga on 13th November 1317, in the reign of Abu Said, son of Oljaitu, being then seventy-two years of age.

Whether Dr. Mingana is right or not in supposing that the Turkish confederacies known as Keraits, Uigurs, Naimans and Merkites were those spoken of in the letter from Philoxenus as Christian and as having Christian kings in the early part of the sixth century, there is no room for doubt as to their being so in the eleventh and still less in the thirteenth centuries. The reference to the baptism of the king and 200,000 of his subjects is conclusive as regards the Keraits, and the story of Marcos and Cauma just referred to is equally so as regards the Uigurs.

Rubruck speaks of the Uigurs as Christians of the sect of the Nestorians. Mingana is of opinion that 'the majority of the Uigurs and also of the Keraits were Christians.'[1] The same was true of the Naimans. This was the name given to a powerful confederacy of nine Turco-Tatar tribes which lived in the 'mountains of Tarbagatai on the upper Irtish.'[2] Rubruck speaks of them as 'a people

[1] Mingana, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. IX, p. 316.
[2] Rockhill, *Rubruck's Journey to Tartary*, pp. 110, 116.

called Naiman who were Nestorian Christians ' and had a Christian king. Persian writers speak of them as ' Tarsa,' an epithet applied to Christians.

A fourth group of tribes, half of whom were probably Christian, were Merkites, a people of Turkish origin but with a mixture of Mongol blood.[1] They were divided into four main sections and dwelt on the lower Selinga and its tributaries.

Still a fifth group was that called Uriyan-gakit, which was largely if not entirely Christian and had in A.D. 1298 a Christian queen. Confirmation of this is found in the colophon at the end of a Syriac lectionary of the gospels in the library of the Chaldean (Nestorian Uniate) Bishop of Diarbekir. It is in letters of gold on a blue background and indicates that the lectionary was written in the year A.D. 1298 for Queen Arungal, sister of Georges, king of the Christian Turks called Ganatu Uriyang. Blochet in his Introduction to *l'Histoire des Mongols*, page 181 is of opinion that ' the name represents the powerful Turkish agglomeration of tribes called Uriyan-gakit who must thus have been undoubtedly Christian ' in the year mentioned. King George is probably the king of that name referred to by Marco Polo and John of Monte Corvino. He was killed in the same year, leaving an infant child whom Monte Corvino baptized.

Another Christian tribe, or at least one in which there were a considerable number of Christians, was

[1] Mingana, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. IX, p. 317.

the Kangli, which rose to power in the district between Talas and Issyk-kul sometime prior to the Mongol invasion. In all probability the Christians of Semiryechensk formed part of the Kangli, but of this we have no definite proof.

Christianity by this time was widely spread throughout the whole of Turkestan, and had the Kanglis been an exception, it would certainly have been noticed. Nestorians of the thirteenth century in speaking of the advent of the Kanglis, say nothing about their becoming Muhammadans, as they would have done if this had actually taken place.[1]

A tribe about whom there has been some discussion as to whether they were Christians or not, is that of the Kitans or Kitai, whose sway extended from the Caspian sea to the Gobi desert, and at one time, about the beginning of the twelfth century or earlier, included the Karakanides, Kangli and other important tribes. These latter were really quite independent but acknowledged the Kitai as their overlord. (The Karakanides later on became subject to the Seljuks). They were said to be Zoroastrians or sun worshippers, but Barthold says that Adrisi confounded the Kimaks, who were fire worshippers and unbelievers, with the Kitans. The Kimaks may have been the half-wild people who were in the army of the Kitans.

There is no definite evidence that the Kitans were Christianized to any great extent although

[1] Barthold-Stube, *Zur Geschichte des Christentums in mittel Asien*, p. 60.

there were certainly Christians among them. They were very highly civilized and had huge castles and places of recreation. Of the inhabitants of Balasaghun, the capital, it was said 'that they knew neither care nor want and were the richest and happiest men in the whole land. The city was surrounded by a strong wall with iron doors and guarded by a strong and brave army. The streets, bazaars and greater part of the houses had a water supply.'

The Gurkhan (Tasih) of the Kitans was called by the Chinese Yelu-ta-sih. [1] He was the overlord of the rulers of both east and west Turkestan.

The Kitans had appropriated all the fruit of Chinese culture and Yelu-ta-sih was held in high respect by his people. He forbade robbery and violence. The Kitans destroyed no towns but founded many new ones. When they had captured a town they did not plunder the inhabitants but levied a tax of a dinar on each house. They took trouble to teach the restless nomads agriculture. The first Gurkhan never placed more than 100 riders under the command of a single person. But although they were so advanced in many ways it does not follow that they were Christians.

Barthold thinks that there may have been a few Christian elements in the army of the Kitan Gurkhan and that, therefore, the Nestorians confounded them with the Christian rulers known to them.[2] If

[1] Barthold-Stube, *Zur Geschichte des Christentums in mittel Asien*, pp. 52, 53.
[2] Idem, p. 54.

all the Kitans had been Christians it would have been mentioned by both Christian and Muhammadan writers.

Like the Chinese, the Kitans gave their protection to all religions, including Islam. Muhammadan historians praise the righteousness of the Gurkhans. This in itself proves that they were not Nestorians. Notwithstanding this, the Muhammadans did not have predominance, nor were they allowed to exercise their fanaticism as they might have done in a country where Islam was in the ascendant. Christianity spread more freely among the Kitans than among those who were subject to the rule of Islam—as were the Karakanides after the rise of the Seljuks in the eleventh century.

That there were considerable numbers of Christians among the Kitans is indicated by the fact that the Patriarch Elias II, A.D. 1176–1190, is said to have appointed a metropolitan to Kashgar which was one of the residences of the Gurkhan of the Kitans. [1] Amr describes the metropolitan of Kashgar as of Kashgar and Nuakit.

What the influence of the Christians was on the ruling dynasty we cannot tell, but the daughter of the last Gurkhan, the wife of the usurper Kutschluk, is said to have been a Christian. It is thought that the older tomb inscriptions at Semiryechensk may belong to the period of the Kitan rulership.

[1] Barthold-Stube, *Zur Geschichte des Christentums in mittel Asien*, p. 58.

On one of the stones, Chwolson believes he can make out the number 1406 (A.D. 1095), but if this is so the inscription would belong to the period of the Karakanides, prior to the Mongol era.

The last, but by no means the least important, of the Turco-Tartar tribes to be influenced by Christian teaching and practice were the Moal or Mongols. Later they were known as Moguls, or Moghuls. In the person of Babar, sixth in descent from Tamerlane, they founded a Muhammadan dynasty in India which continued until the middle of the nineteenth century. Rubruck divides them into Yeka or great Mongols, and Su or aquatic Mongols. [1] The latter called themselves Tartars after a certain river called Tatar or Tartar which flowed through their country. The area occupied by them was shared with the Merkites and Mecrit or Keraits. [2] (The Merkites are the modern Buriats, and the Keraits, the Kalmuks). They all spoke the same language and were similar in physical appearance. The people usually designated Mongols were not all members of that particular tribe but included Tartars, Uigurs and Turks. The Tartars became so powerful and were held in such awe that other Turkish peoples passed themselves off as Tartars and considered themselves honoured by the name. Thus Chelairs, Uriates, Unguts, Keraits, Naimans and Tanguts were all described as Tartars or Mongols, although the Mongols were only one of the Turkish nations.

[1] Rockhill, *Rubruck's Journey to Tartary*, p. 113.
[2] Howorth, *History of the Mongols*, Vol. I, p. 557.

Jenghiz Khan, it is said, used to send the Tartar section of his people to carry out his orders and everywhere the cry was heard 'The Tartars are coming.' As the result of many wars they were nearly all killed and the way left clear for the ascendancy of the other section, and the exaltation of the name Mongol. It is to the latter that attention has now to be directed.

There were many Christians among the Mongols, and more than one of the emperors, and viceroys, were known as followers of Jesus of Nazareth. The most outstanding figure among the Mongols was Jenghiz Khan referred to above. His first appearance on the scene was in A.D. 1203, when after defeating Ung Khan the powerful chief of the Keraits, he secured the submission of the Kerait people. He next subjugated the Naimans and conquered Tangut, and from that time onward till his death in A.D. 1227 his career was one of conquest and expansion. He was succeeded by his son Ogotai, and he in turn was succeeded by his son Guyuk. Neither Jenghiz nor Ogotai are known to have been Christians, but they were favourably disposed towards them, granted them liberty of worship and issued orders to prevent their having any just cause of complaint by word or deed.[1] But of Guyuk, Bar Hebraeus writes: 'He was a true Christian and in his days the prestige of the numerous Christian bodies in his dominions was very high.

[1] Vambéry, *History of Bokhara*, p. 17.

His camp was full of bishops, priests and monks.'[1] It was to Guyuk that John of Pian de Carpini in A.D. 1246 brought a letter from the Pope of Rome. We have no information as to its contents but their nature may be guessed from Guyuk's reply, written in Persian and addressed to Pope Innocent IV. Guyuk's letter formed one of the exhibits at the recent Vatican Missionary exhibition held in Rome in A.D. 1925.[2] In it he protests against the invasion of his kingdom by (Latin) missionaries and still more against the assumption that there could possibly be potentate or people not subject to the Mongol Emperors. He concludes 'and if thou sayest I am a Christian, I adore God and reject other religions how dost thou know whom God absolves and in favour of whom he dispenses mercy? How art thou so sure of these things as to pronounce such words?'

One of the sons of Jenghiz was said to have had a Christian mother and one of his generals was also a Christian. Of another king it is said that he too had a Christian mother, and that, on the advice and at the exhortation of Prester John and a bishop called Mallasius, he was baptized and eighteen of his sons with him, together with his leading men and officers.

Hulaku, viceroy of Persia, a cousin of Guyuk, is described as a supporter of the Christian religion. He had as his wife Dokuz Khatun, the daughter of Tuli, brother of Ogotai. Hulaku was also a son of

[1] Mingana, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. IX. p. 312.
[2] Descriptive letter from Rome, *Madras Mail*, Nov. 7, 1925.

Tuli. Dokuz Khatun must, therefore, have been either his sister or his half sister. If so it explains the meaning of the phrase used in reference to his marriage that it was 'according to the custom of the Mongols.' Dokuz Khatun is described as 'the believing and true Christian queen.' She exercised a great influence for good on her husband. When Baghdad was taken by the Mongols the Christians, as Bar Hebraeus tells us, were spared death and torture because of 'the magnanimity, the wisdom and marvellously high character of Hulaku.'[1] The description here given is somewhat different from that which we are accustomed to associate with Hulaku's name. Dr. Mingana says of him, 'His figure has been blackened almost beyond recognition by some modern writers.' 'Judged by our ethical standards he was undoubtedly cruel but our standards are not those of the Mongols nor even those of the early empires of Asia and Europe' and the 'testimony of a contemporary of the standing of Bar Hebraeus cannot be entirely disregarded.' Hulaku died in A.D. 1265. In the same year the believing queen Dokuz Khatun also died. 'The Christians of the whole world greatly mourned the loss of these two great luminaries and protagonists of the Christian religion.'

Mangu, brother of Hulaku, who succeeded Guyuk on the throne of the Mongols is described by Rashid as 'a follower and defender of the religion of Jesus.'

[1] Mingana, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. IX, p. 312.

Although Rashid does not state definitely that Mangu was a Christian the words used are probably meant to imply this.

The wife of Tuli, Sarkutti Bagi by name, mother of Mangu, Hulaku and Kublai Khan and perhaps also of Dokuz Khatun, was 'a true believer and a very wise woman.'[1] She was niece of the Kerait king Ung Khan of Prester John fame.

Among other instances that show how widely Christian teaching and influence had spread among the Mongols are the following:

The grand vizier of the emperor Guyuk, Kaddak by name, was a Christian.[2] The Secretary of the emperor Mangu, called Bulgai, was a Nestorian as was also Mangu's interpreter. On one occasion when there was a dispute between the Christians of Arbel and the Muhammadans, the Mongol governor of north Mesopotamia who was a Christian, took the side of his fellow believers and helped them. The envoy of Kublai Khan, a Turkish Uigurian nobleman, was a Christian, and Christians were given the governorship of north Mesopotamia. The emperor Abaka was friendly to Christians and at one time ordered that the clerks in government offices were to be either Christians or Jews, and not Muslims. Sigatsy, viceroy of Samarkand, another brother of Ogotai, is stated to have become a Christian.[3] In commemoration of this the Christians

[1] Mingana, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, pp. 312, 313.
[2] Rockhill, *Rubruck's Journey to Tartary*, p. 159.
[3] Yule, *Marco Polo*, Vol. I, pp. 169, 198.

of Samarkand erected a large new church and dedicated it to the memory of John the Baptist.[1]

Attention so far has been confined chiefly to tribes or groups of tribes and individuals. It only remains to refer briefly to cities and districts where Christians were numerous and influential. Assemani writes that the growth of Christianity in the eleventh and twelfth centuries all through Turkestan and Mongolia, due to the activity of the Nestorians was so extensive that metropolitans, with bishops subordinate to them, were established throughout the provinces of Kashgar, Nuakit, Turkestan, Gunda and Tangut.[2] The city of Tangut, the capital of the province of that name, was an important centre. It gave rise to a kingdom, called by the Chinese Hsi Hsia, which ruled over the present Chinese province of Kansu and the adjoining country from A.D. 1004 to A.D. 1226. It was then overthrown by Jenghiz Khan. That the city of Tangut had a large Christian population is evident from the fact that when Rabbans Sauma and Marcos came there on their way to Jerusalem, the Christian inhabitants, men, women and children, turned out to meet them 'because the faith of the Tangutians was very staunch and their heart pure.'[3] Isho Sabran, metropolitan of Tangut, was one of those who consecrated Yahb Alaha III. The seat of the bishop of Tibet, referred to elsewhere, was probably Tangut. Its elevation to the rank of a metropolitan

[1] Yule, Cordier's *Marco Polo*, Vol. I, pp. 182–7.
[2] Assemani, *Bibliothica Orientalis*, III, ii, p. 502.
[3] Mingana, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. IX, p. 324.

see may probably date back to about A.D. 790, and may have included in its area the Hsi-an-fu of the Nestorian monument in China.

Another important Nestorian centre was the city of Kashgar, a well known town in eastern Turkestan, the capital of the province of the same name. It was called Sin Kiang, or the new dominion, by the Chinese. It lies to the north of Kashmir from which it is separated by the Kungur Alps. It was almost completely destroyed by famine and wars, and when the monks Sauma and Marcos reached it on their way to Jerusalem they found no one there. Forty years earlier, in A.D. 1180, two metropolitans were nominated for it, first, one John, and after his death, Sabrisho. It must, however, have been re-occupied later as we find Marco Polo speaking of Nestorians there. They were very numerous, he says, and had churches of their own.[1] Yarkand, Tangut, Chingintalas and Suchur are also mentioned by Marco Polo.[2] In the latter place about half of the inhabitants were Nestorians. In Kanchou they had, he says, 'three very fine churches.' There were Christians and churches also in Erguil, Sinju and Calachan.[3] In Tenduc the rule of the province was in the hands of the Christians. Other places are also mentioned.

Rubruck found Nestorian Christians in nearly all the countries he visited.[4]

[1] Yule, Cordier's *Marco Polo*, I, pp. 182–7.
[2] Idem, pp. 212, 7.
[3] Idem, p. 274.
[4] Rockhill, *Rubruck's Journey to Tartary*, Hakluyt Series, pp. 116, 141 ff.

Nicolo Conti speaks of 'a kingdom twenty days' journey from Cathay of which the king and all the inhabitants' were 'Christians but heretics being Nestorians.' [1]

John de Carpini speaks of the Kirghiz and the Alans 'who were Christians.' [2]

In the household of Sartach, a Mongol leader, there was a certain Nestorian called Coic, a Moal or Mongol. Thinking the word Christian was the name of a people, he said, 'you must not say that our Lord is a Christian. He is not a Christian but a Moal.' [3]

In the middle ages the Christian Turks and Mongols in Central Asia, Persia and Mesopotamia were so numerous that Nestorian hymn writers were obliged to compose hymns in Mongolian for their special benefit.[4] One such hymn beginning 'the Son of Mary is born to us' is in alternate strophes, one in Syriac and the other Mongolian.

Some fragments of a lectionary of the gospels as used by the Nestorians were found near Turfan in Chinese Turkestan. These agree with the text used by the Nestorian church in Mesopotamia and Persia. They are written in Syriac characters, but in the Soghdian dialect of middle Persia with some complete sentences in Syriac.

In Manichean writings also we find references, Christian in character, 'which could not have eman-

[1] Yule's *Cathay and the Way Thither*, Vol. ii. pp. 165–6.
[2] Rockhill, *Rubruck's Journey to Tartary*, p. 100.
[3] Idem. p. 107.
[4] Mingana, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. IX, p. 338.

ated except from Nestorians of those countries.' [1] There are coins of the Mongolian Il-Khans such as Abaka and Arghun which are called coins of the cross, and bear the Christian legend 'In the name of the Father, the Son and Holy Ghost, one God.'

'The influence which the Nestorian Christians exercised on the Turks, even on those among them who were Muhammadan, is evidenced by the fact that about A.D. 1200 one Sulaiman of Bakirghan in the Khanate of Khiva, inspired by Nestorian writings on the same subject, composed in Turki a poem on the death of the virgin.' [2]

Assemani gives a geographical dictionary of eighty-two pages in which are a number of the less known names, 236 in all, with their locations and other information, which were centres of Nestorian activity,[3] and it is certain there were multitudes of Christians in areas that in later centuries were peopled entirely either by Muhammadans or idolators.[4] That these Christians were Nestorian in creed, and subject to the Patriarch of Baghdad is, Assemani states, so certain as to be beyond controversy.

The respect in which even non-Christian kings held the Nestorians is shown by the fact that they used to take off their headgear and bend the knee before their Patriarch.[5] When Hulaku Khan led

[1] Mingana, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*. Vol. IX, p. 339.
[2] Idem, p. 342.
[3] Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, III, ii, pp. 706–788.
[4] Idem, III, ii. p. 502.
[5] Mingana, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. IX, p. 342.

forth his hordes in A.D. 1258 the metropolitan of Samarkand sent an express messenger to carry the news to the Catholicos at Baghdad.

At the beginning of the eleventh century the power of the Nestorian Patriarch extended from China to the Tigris and from lake Baikal to Cape Comorin.[1] And all this was accomplished without any of the elaborate machinery that we have come to look upon as necessary for the carrying on of the missionary work of the twentieth century.

If one compares the outcome of the missionary activity of the 'Church of the East' with the results of the more highly developed organizations of to-day one may well ask if the missionaries of these early centuries have not, even yet, something to teach us as to the methods and conditions that are essential for the gathering out and building up of a Christian community which shall be not only self-supporting and self-governing but, most important of all, self-propagating as well.

Note. Letter alleged to have been sent by Prester John to the Emperor Alexis Comnenus, who died in A.D. 1118.

John, priest by the power and virtue of God and our Lord Jesus Christ, Lord of Lords, to the sovereign of Constantinople. May he enjoy health and prosperity by the grace of God. It has been made known to our majesty that you esteem our excellence and that there has been speech among you of our grandeur. We have learned from our secretary that you had intention to send us some articles of luxury and of curiosity. What we desire and wish to know is whether you have, like us, the true faith, whether you believe in our Lord Jesus Christ. We know that you are a man and that your little people take you for a sovereign, although you are but a mortal destined to corruption. . . . . Do you desire to know the grandeur and excellence of our dynasty, the extent of our power and dominion? Know and believe that I am the presbyter John, the servant of God, and that I surpass in riches, in power and in virtue, all the kings of the

[1] Neales, *History of the Holy Eastern Church*, Vol. I, p. 133.

earth. Sixty-two kings are tributary to me. I am a zealous Christian and I protect and support by my alms the poor Christians who are subject to our merciful empire. We have formed a project of visiting the sepulchre of our Lord at the head of a great army, as becomes the glory of our majesty, and we wish to combat and to humble the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose name be blessed and exalted. Our magnificence dominates the three Indies. Our domains, setting out from further India, where reposes the body of St. Thomas the apostle, advance across the deserts to the place where the sun is born and return by a circuit to the ruins of Babylon not far from the tower of Babel. Sixty-two provinces, of which few are Christians, obey us. Each has its king and all are tributary to us. One of our provinces, inhabited by pagans, is traversed by a river called the Indus. . . . . We believe that we have no equal either for the quantity of our riches or the number of our subjects. When we issue forth to make war upon our enemies we have borne before us upon 13 cars, 13 large and precious crosses, ornamented with gold and jewels. Each cross is followed by 10,000 horsemen and 100,000 foot soldiers without counting the men of war charged to conduct the baggage and provisions of the army. When we go out on horseback our majesty is preceded by a cross without either gold, jewels or any ornament in order that we may always remember the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ ; then there is a golden vase filled with earth reminding us that our body must return whence it came, that is to say to the earth, and lastly there is a silver vase filled with gold that everyone may understand that we are Lord of Lords. Our magnificence surpasses all the riches in the world. Every year we visit the body of the prophet Daniel in the province of Babylon. We rule over the Amazons and likewise over the Brahmins. The palace in which our sublimity resides is like that built by St. Thomas for Gondophorus the king of India, etc.

CHAPTER VII

THE NESTORIAN SINO-SYRIAC MONUMENT AT HSI-AN-FU AND THE SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY IN CHINA AND JAPAN

In the province of Shensi, north China—Lat. 34° 12 N, and Long. 108° 5 E. there is a city called Hsi-an-fu or Hsingan-fu. It is said to be the most historical city in, and was for centuries the capital of, northern China. It became known as Hsi-an-fu during the Ming dynasty in the second half of the fourteenth century. Prior to that it was known as Ch'ang-an, a name which is now applied exclusively to the district in which the city stands. The history of Ch'ang-an gives us the history of China from the earliest time of which there is any record or tradition. The golden age of Ch'ang-an was during the T'ang dynasty which came into power A.D. 618. During the seventh and the two subsequent centuries the city of Ch'ang-an occupied the position in Asia that Madrid did in Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[1] Its splendour was proverbial. It was the capital of China for five out of nineteen dynasties and ten out of thirty centuries of its alleged existence. In the T'ang era, the number of postal towns in China is said to have been 1639, and of these forty-seven were within one hundred miles of Hsi-an-fu, to which all roads led.

[1] Prof. Saeki, Waseda University, Tokyo, *The Nestorian Monument in China*, p. 4.

One of the traditions current among the Chinese of Hsi-an-fu, a tradition referred to also in Chinese records, is to the effect that in A.D. 64, the Chinese emperor Ming-ti, as the result of a dream, sent messengers along one of the roads leading to the west to ascertain who was the great prophet who had arisen in these western lands. They met two missionaries on their way to his court and returned with them.[1] The missionaries remained there till they died, six years later. The only relic of their teaching is to be found in the scripture of forty-two sections, a set of logia of New Testament character without any specific Buddhist tenet in them.

Mrs. Gordon, the authoress of a book which deals with the whole matter, reproduces from the Kurodani Jodo temple in Kyoto Japan, a picture, on a rock tomb, of the resurrection and ascension, treated very much in the style of the old masters of Italy and Flanders. Dharma, one of the most familiar figures in Japanese pictorial saint lore, is seen sitting at the entrance to the tomb. She identifies Dharma with one of the two missionaries who came to the court of Ming-ti.

The Chinese Recorder for February 1924 reproduces a Taoist account of the life of Christ, translated by Professor Karl L. Reichelt from the great Taoist work *Shen Hsien Kang Chien*, a treatise as well-known among Buddhists as among Taoists. It consists of twenty-two volumes and

[1] *Church Quarterly Review*, Vol. LXXV, p. 319.

dates from the 39th year of Kanghsi's reign (A.D. 1701). The account referred to occurs in the ninth volume, pp. 26–28. It gives quite a good and touching summary of the Life of Christ from his birth to his death and after, including the account of his crucifixion, his rising again on the third day, and his ascension after forty days. The narrative appears in connection with the account of an irruption of western tribes into China during the reign of the Emperor Kuang-Wu-Ti (A.D. 25–28) where we read, 'During the winter time the western tribes rushed in but Ma-Yuen, one of the great generals of Kuang-Wu-Ti, dispersed them and drove them away. People from those western countries give the following account' and then comes the narrative referred to, the implication being that the story was brought to China by those invading western tribes in the first century after Christ. Although written from a Roman Catholic standpoint and showing certain Buddhistic influences, it quite evidently reproduces a very old Christian tradition.

A well known missionary, resident for many years in Nanking, states that there are evidences of a wide spread spiritual awakening having taken place in China in the latter part of the first century of the present era. There is nothing to show, either for or against, that it was definitely Christian, but such a movement is more likely to have had a Christian origin than any other.

With the exception of a reference by Arnobius who, in his book *Adversus Gentes*, written about A.D.

303, speaks of the Seres or Chinese as among those who were united in the faith of Christ,[1] there is nothing beyond tradition until we arrive at the year A.D. 635, one of the dates mentioned on the Sino-Syriac monument, when we enter the region of something more definite than mere legend.

The monument referred to was discovered in the year A.D. 1625 near Ch'an-gan and furnishes conclusive evidence of the existence of considerable Christian communities in China in the seventh and eighth centuries. It is said to have been found by some Chinese, when digging the foundations for a house, at a village about a mile from the western gate of the city.[2] Emanuel Diaz, however, claims that it was discovered at a village thirty miles distant from Hsi-an-fu, and in A.D. 1623.[3]

In the eastern part of the city of Hsi-an-fu there is a place called the 'Pei-lin' or 'forest of tablets,' where the Chinese keep all the precious stone monuments of the city and also some of those belonging to other cities. This particular monument after being left standing on open ground, near to where it was found, for nearly three centuries, was removed in A.D. 1907 to this 'Pei-lin.' Before its removal, a facsimile was made by Dr. Fritz Holm, an American traveller and taken to New York, where, after a time, casts were made and presented to museums in different parts of the world,

[1] Gibbings Mosheim's *History of Christianity in China*, p. 8.
[2] Wylie, *Researches in China*, p. 25.
[3] Saeki, *The Nestorian Monument in China*, pp. 12-22.

the original copy being then donated by Dr. Holm to the Lateran Museum in Rome.[1]

Wylie says the first Westerner to see the monument after exhumation was a Jesuit missionary named Alvarez Semedo. This was in the year A.D. 1628. Wall (op. cit. infra), however, questions this and believes for reasons, which he gives, that some of the Jesuit missionaries saw it immediately or very soon after it was discovered.

According to Kircher, quoted by Wall, the Jesuits began work in the province of Shensi some years prior to A.D. 1625.

There has been a very considerable amount of controversy regarding the genuineness of the monument, some holding that it is authentic, others that it is a forgery, while Dr. Wall, in a treatise on the *Ancient Orthography of the Jews*, Vol. II, takes the view that the monument was really found, and that the Syriac part of the inscription is genuine but that the Chinese portion is a modern fabrication, meant to 'save the face' of the Chinese mandarins, in which the Jesuit missionaries shared. As the mandarins were unable to decipher the original they made a copy of the stone, substituted a new inscription for the illegible Chinese part, and then did away with the original altogether. The title as given by Saeki, is as follows:

'Eulogy on a monument commemorating the propagation of the Ta-Ch'in Luminous Religion in

[1] Fritz Holm, *My Nestorian Adventure.*

the middle kingdom with a preface to the same, composed by Ching-Ching a priest of the Ta-Ch'in monastery. (In Syriac) Adam priest, chorepiscopus and papas (pope) of Zhinastan.'[1] It is unnecessary to reproduce the inscription itself as it is available for reference in any good library.

It tells how one A-lo-pu arrived in Ch'ang-an A.D. 635 bringing the sacred scriptures, and proceeds to eulogise the various emperors and dynasties, and tells how the former issued edicts and ordered their portraits to be taken and transferred to the walls of the churches, where 'the dazzling splendour of the celestial visage irradiated the illustrious portals.'[2]

Dr. Legge the well known Chinese scholar, in a lecture on the monument says: In the inscription 'not a word is said about the miracles of Christ or anything specially bearing on His crucifixion, death or resurrection. There is little in it particularly ritualistic but there is nothing at all evangelical.' He further refers to a remark by another missionary, who, when asked to what he attributed the failure of Nestorianism, replied 'How could it succeed? There is no gospel in it.'

If it is assumed that the statements in the inscription as it is at present are genuine it must be admitted that the Nestorian missionaries must have degenerated far from the position maintained by them in the early centuries. But if the inscription is fictitious it puts an entirely different complexion on the matter.

[1] Saeki, *The Nestorian Monument in China*, p. 161 ff.
[2] Wylie, *Researches in China*, p. 28.

Bury, in a note to Gibbon, accepts the inscription as genuine and commends Gibbon for doing so as well,[1] but makes no reference to the admission in Kircher's *Prodromus Coptus* (A.D. 1636) and *China Illustrata* (A.D. 1667), both of which he mentions, that a facsimile of the stone had been prepared.

Among those who question the veracity of the monument, Wylie mentions Horne, Spizelius, La Croze and Voltaire, and quotes E. E. Salisbury, Professor of Arabic and Sanscrit in Yale, U. S. as saying 'that the Nestorian monument is now generally regarded by the learned as a forgery.'

Salisbury, quoted by Wylie, refers also to a statement by Professor C. F. Neumann, one of the leading opponents of its genuineness, to the effect 'that both the Chinese and Syriac characters on the inscription are modern, not such as were in use in the eighth century.'[2] Voltaire considers that it was nothing but 'a pious fraud of the Jesuits to deceive the Chinese.'

Huc indignantly rejects this dictum of Voltaire's and insists on the genuineness of the monument.[3] Wylie supports this point of view, and after a very exhaustive enquiry in which he quotes largely from different authors, he concludes by saying that he has not been able to discover the slightest hint of suspicion as to its genuineness or authenticity.

Dr. Wall contends that the Chinese inscription is proved to be fictitious, firstly, by the circumstances

[1] Bury's *Gibbon*, Vol. V. p. 551.
[2] Wylie, *Researches in China*, p. 73.
[3] Huc, *Christianity in China*, Vol. I, p. 81.

under which it was communicated to the public, secondly, by the nature of its contents, and thirdly, by the characters in which it is written. As regards the first, he says, that 'as soon as the governor of the province heard of the discovery of this record he had it seized and got, as we are told, a most accurate copy of it taken for the inspection of the public, while the original was made away with and never afterwards heard of'[1]; and the question put by Wall is, 'If the second inscription was in reality an exact facsimile of the first, why incur the trouble and expense of making it?'[2] A copy, however accurately made, must ever be looked upon as of inferior value to the original.

The fact that such a substitution was made is admitted by Kircher both in his *Prodromus Coptus* and in his *China Illustrata*, as well as in every account of the matter which has been transmitted to us. Father Martin Martini in his *Chinese Atlas* quoted by Kircher, referring to the finding of the monument, makes the same admission.[3]

The reason given by Wall for the substitution is that the ancient writing of the Chinese is now wholly illegible, and that since the mandarins are most anxious to conceal this defect of their graphic system wherever it can be done without incurring

[1] Wall, *Ancient Jewish Orthography*, Vol. II, p. 160.

[2] Gibbings Mosheim's, *History of Christianity in China*, p. 16.

[3] Martini's words are: 'De invento monumento mox certior factus loci gubernator, cum venerandae antiquitatis, cujus amantissimi sunt Sinae, vestigia proprius fuisset intuitus continuo scripto quodam in monumenti laudem edito, *in altero ejusdem magnitudinis lapide totam inventi saxi perigraphen incidi curavit*, iisdem characterum notarumque ductibus, qua par erat fide, servatis.'

undue suspicion, they mutilate and efface every old Chinese record which they can lay their hands on. But as in the present instance public attention had been directed to the monument before they could obtain possession of it, they had to have recourse to a more indirect method of getting rid of it, under the pretext of making a copy more perfect than the original. The Jesuit fathers were able to help them in the carrying out of this plan as they had several mandarins or 'colai' (as Kircher calls them) among their converts, and at least two of these Christian mandarins seem to have had a hand in the preparation of the stone.

The discovery of the monument caused such excitement and contributed so much to the success of the Jesuit missionaries of that period that in A.D. 1637, according to Abbe Huc, there were 40,000 Christians in seven provinces.[1] The Emperor could no longer argue against Christianity on the ground that it was a new religion, seeing it was now proved that it had been there a thousand years earlier.[2]

From statements in *China Illustrata* it is evident that the Jesuits had access to the monument almost immediately after it came into the hands of the Chinese 'officials,' and saw the original in time to give their valuable assistance in the preparation of the copy.[3]

[1] Huc, *Christianity in China*, Vol. II, p. 290.
[2] Gibbings Mosheim's *History of Christianity in China*, p. 16
[3] Wall, *Ancient Jewish Orthography*, Vol. II, p. 163.

Semedo claims that he saw the old inscription in A.D. 1628 and was 'astonished that it was so complete and the letters so entire and well formed after the lapse of so many years.' [1] Wherein then lay the necessity for making a replica? [2]

The second argument against its genuineness is the nature of its contents. Semedo states that neither he nor any of the other Jesuits could read the Syriac part of the inscription, and that its meaning was only ascertained after he had taken a copy of it to Rome. Wall questions the accuracy of this statement and holds that the Jesuits, or some of them, were in all probability familiar with Syriac. Nor were the mandarins able to decipher the Chinese part, but they were able to maintain credit for their learning and conceal the defect of the national system of writing by the assistance of the Jesuits, who helped them so to frame the Chinese part of the inscription for the second stone, that it apparently derived some support from the Syriac part.

This also gave the latter the opportunity to represent the doctrines of the ancient Christians as agreeing with the modern tenets of the church of Rome.

Wall quotes from two translations of the inscription, one by Boim which is literal, and the other by Kircher which is a mere paraphrase, and not a very accurate paraphrase at that. He gives the

[1] Huc, *Christianity in China*, Vol. I, p. 81.
[2] Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither*, Vol. I, p. 236. Gibbings Mosheim's *History of Christianity in China*, p. 17.

Latin translation of Boim in full and draws special attention to the fact that it speaks not only of a fiery place of purification but of the power exercised by the priest to give rest to the souls of the deceased. In other words, it refers to the Romish doctrine of purgatory which has never at any time been accepted by the Nestorians, nor is it found in any of their service books.

Other considerations equally at variance with either the ancient or modern practice of the Nestorians are: First, the readiness shown in the inscription to yield to the demands of pagan superstition. It is also noteworthy that not one single event connected with the life of Christ between His birth and death is referred to, and even the latter is referred to only very indirectly. Nor is the name by which He was known in His human capacity on the earth even mentioned.

Secondly, the flattery paid to the Chinese emperors and the exultation with which the erection of their images in the churches, apparently for the purpose of worship, is spoken of. This alone, apart from anything else, is sufficient to rule out the genuineness of the inscription, for the Nestorians have never at any time tolerated the worship of images of any kind, either of emperors or saints, nor do they tolerate a crucifix, although they reverence highly the cross as the symbol of their faith.

One of the most recent of Roman Catholic writers, referring to the present practice of the Nestorians in the matter of images says, 'they have

no holy pictures in their churches or houses and they abhor the idea of a holy picture.'[1] When a representation of the Blessed Virgin was exhibited to the Christians of Malabar by Menezes, archbishop of Goa about A.D. 1599, he was met with the exclamation, 'We are Christians, we do not worship idols.'

Thirdly, the characters in which the Chinese part of the inscription dealing with the proper names incorporated in it are written. The testimony of Professor Neumann as to the modern nature of the whole of the characters in the inscription is, that the significance of the Chinese symbols changes so constantly that an inscription written in the symbols in use in the eighth century would be utterly unintelligible in the seventeenth.

Chinese writing is obscure and extremely vague, and because of its ideographic character especially liable to become illegible.[2] Changes in the signification of characters, entirely arbitrary in their formation, are constantly taking place, and, notwithstanding the boast of the learned in China that the symbols which they employ have not been altered for the last two thousand years, it is impossible to ascertain the meaning of monumental inscriptions of such alleged antiquity. Confirmation of this is found in the notes by Beal appended to his translation of the account of the travels of Hiuen Tsiang, in *Buddhist Records of the Western World*. In one place in the introduction to Hiuen Tsiang by Chang

[1] Fortescue, *Lesser Eastern Churches*, pp. 136–137.
[2] Gibbings Mosheim's *History of Christianity in China*, pp. 17-20.

Yueh, written about the eighth century, Beal translates a phrase by the words, 'From the time of T'ang Yao (2356 B.C.) there have come down clear records of events,' but adds that Julien, a French expert, gives exactly the opposite sense.[1]

Of another passage he says, 'this at least appears to be the meaning.' Of still another passage he says, 'I cannot think Julien is right in translating this passage thus.' Similar remarks, showing uncertainty as to the exact meaning, frequently occur.

In fact, writing of this nature is found to be unintelligible in proportion to its age and the time during which it has been out of use, and mandarins who pretend to trace back national history with preciseness for four thousand years are simply impostors.[2]

Saeki says, 'the genuineness of the monument itself is one thing while the accuracy of the inscription is another.'[3] 'One cannot say that all the statements in this inscription are correct simply because the stone itself is genuine.'

Nau thinks that it was probably a monument in memory of early Christian pioneers, and that twenty-four of the names given in it were the names of persons who had died after the establishment of the mission in the town rather than the names of those who were still alive.[4] As illustrating the uncertainty in the signification of the various Chinese symbols,

[1] Beal, *Buddhist Records of the Western World*, p. 8.
[2] Wall, *Ancient Jewish Orthography*, Vol. III, p. 214.
[3] Saeki, *The Nestorian Monument in China*, p. 92.
[4] Nau, *L'expansion Nestorienne en Asie*, p. 253.

he refers to the find in A.D. 1890 among the ruins of Karabalgasun (ancient Karakorum) the capital of the Uigur empire in the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries and of the Mongol empire in the middle of the thirteenth, of a number of valuable historical inscriptions, Mongolian, Persian, Tibetan and Chinese. One of the inscriptions in particular had been partly deciphered but is very obscure. It is trilingual, being composed of characters from Chinese, Uigur and another language supposed to be Sogdian, but in Pahlawi characters. The Uigur and Sogdian characters are so illegible that it has not been possible to decipher them. The Chinese are clearer but the difficulty in their case is to determine the exact meaning of any particular symbol 'the probability being that if there were twelve translations of a single text they would all be different'.[1] *

* Dr. Wall's contention that the Chinese part of the inscription on the monument in its present form, devoid as it is of any gospel, is fictitious and does not correctly represent the doctrinal position of the Nestorians is confirmed by the inscriptions on Nestorian crosses of a later date, discovered in South India. There are altogether five such crosses, two of them having been found during the present decade. One is at St. Thomas' Mount near Madras. The other four are all in Travancore. Two of them, one the same in size as that at St. Thomas' Mount the other larger, are in the Jacobite church at Kottayam where they are supposed to have been brought by Mar Abraham from an old church in Cranganor and set up in the church at Kottayam when the church was reconstructed in A.D. 1577. The third was discovered in A.D. 1921 at a place called Katamarram in North Travancore, and the fourth, the most recently discovered, was found in A.D. 1924 at Muttuchira a village near the border of Cochin State. *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. 52, p. 335.

[1] Nau, *L'expansion Nestorienne en Asie*, p. 255.

As to the Syriac part of the inscription, Wall holds that it is genuine.[1] It consists first of all of sixty-seven names, including one bishop, twenty-eight presbyters and thirty-eight others, most of whom Assemani designates as monks, and then of the following inscription in Syriac: 'In the days of the Father of Fathers, Mar Ananjesu, the catholicos and patriarch, when Adam, priest, was vicar, bishop and Pope, i.e., metropolitan, of China, in the year one thousand and ninety-two of the era of the Greeks, (A.D. 781) Mar Jazedbuzid, priest and chorepiscopus of Kumdan the Royal city, son of Millis of blessed memory, a priest from Balkh, a city of Tachuristan, erected this marble tablet on which are inscribed the redemption of our Saviour and of the preaching of our fathers to the kings of China. Adam, deacon,

The inscription on the cross at St. Thomas' Mount (discovered in A.D. 1547) is in Pahlawi or old Persian characters. As translated by Haug, with emendation by Dr. Mingana, quoted in the *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. X, p. 506, it reads: 'Who believes in the Messiah and God the Most High and in the Holy Ghost, is redeemed through the grace of Him who bore the cross,' which is clearly evangelical. The same inscription, also in Pahlawi characters, but with a slight modification in the form of the letters appears on one of the Kottayam crosses.

As regards the second Kottayam cross the first part of the inscription is in Estrangeli characters and reproduces the Syriac version of Galatians vi. 14. 'Let me not glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,' a verse which reflects the very essence of the gospel. The cross at St. Thomas' Mount is ascribed to the seventh or eighth centuries A.D. a date which probably applies equally to the smaller Kottayam one with the same inscription. The one with Estrangeli characters is said to belong to the tenth century.

Experts have not yet arrived at a final decision regarding the inscriptions on the Katamarram and Muttuchira crosses.

[1] Wall, *Ancient Jewish Orthography*, Vol. II, p. 239.

son of Jazedbuzid the chorespiscopus: Mar Sergius, priest and chorepiscopus; Sabarjesu priest: Gabriel, priest and archdeacon, church rulers of the cities of Kumdan and Sarag.'

The arguments given by Wall for the authenticity of this part of the inscription are: First, two of the persons engaged in the erection of the monument were sons of clergymen and one of them was even the son of a chorepiscopus. If the Jesuits had fabricated the Syriac part of the inscription they would not have inserted in it a fact so directly opposed in a very important particular to the practice of their representatives (viz., the celibacy of the clergy). Secondly, the monument it is stated, was erected in 1092 of the Greek era (viz. A.D. 781), but the Patriarch Ananjesu died in the year A.D. 778 showing that the authors of the inscription did not hear of his death for more than two years after it happened, a delay that can easily be accounted for by their distance from Baghdad. Had the story been invented, however, the inventor would have been particular to insert the name of the patriarch who actually was the head of the church at that time.

Dr. Mingana, for reasons which he gives, believes that A.D. 779 is more likely to be the equivalent of the Seleucid year 1092 than A.D. 781.[1] This rather confirms Wall's contention than otherwise. Wall gives A.D. 778 as the year of Ananjesu's death. Johanan in his *Death of a Nation* prefers A.D. 777.

[1] Mingana, *Early Spread of Christianity*, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. IX, p. 333

There is no definite information as to when a Nestorian metropolitan was first appointed to China. Some claim that one was sent by the Patriarch Akha (A.D. 410–415) or by Silas (A.D. 503–520). Mingana quotes Ibn at-Tayib who died A.D. 1043 as responsible for the statement that the bishoprics of Samarkand, India and China were elevated to the rank of metropolitan sees by the Patriarch Isho-Yahb (A.D. 628–643).[1] If this were so it implies that there were not only Christians but Christian bishops in China prior to that date. Still another metropolitan is said to have been appointed by the Patriarch Saliba Zacha (A.D. 714–728) and the Patriarch Timothy writing about the year A.D. 790 mentions that the then metropolitan of China had just died.

Christianity, according to Saeki, was well known in China during at least two out of the three centuries of the T'ang dynasty and he claims that, if not nominally, China was at least practically under Christian influence during that period.[2]

Professor A. H. Sayce says that the most brilliant period in the history of China was during the T'ang dynasty A.D. 618–906.[3] When the Nestorians first arrived they were favourably received by the Chinese who at that time were strongly susceptible to foreign influence.

In A.D. 745 an edict was issued by the emperor Hiuen Tsang in which it is declared that 'the

[1] Mingana, *Early Spread of Christianity, Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, p. 367.
[2] Saeki, *Nestorian Monument in China*, p. 93.
[3] Idem, Introduction by Professor Sayce, p. v.

religion of the sacred books known as Persian had originally come from Ta T'sin and that, propagated by preaching and tradition, it had made its way into the middle kingdom and had been for a long time practised therein.'[1] The temples had come to be known as Persian temples, but as this was inaccurate, it was now decreed that the name should be changed to Ta T'sin temples.

In A.D. 783 a rebellion called the Ta Chin rebellion broke out and was suppressed, but in A.D. 845 an imperial edict was issued ordering the destruction of Buddhist temples and monasteries and the return of foreign monks and nuns, 3,000[2] in number, from T'chin (Nestorians) and Muhufu (Muhammadans) to secular life. So far as the Nestorians are concerned the edict does not seem to have had much effect, as a few years later we find that the Patriarch Theodore (A.D. 852–858) still refers to the metropolitans of Samarkand, India and China.'[3] No doubt the reason why the monument was buried and remained undiscovered for such a long period was to preserve it from destruction during this time of persecution.

It is evident that a large and influential body of Christians were resident in China in the year A.D. 780, and it appears to be almost equally certain

[1] Saeki, *Nestorian Monument in China*, Introduction by Professor Sayce, p. 94.

[2] Another writer gives the number as 2,000 so that there were at least that number of foreign Missionaries in China at that time, the majority of them Nestorians as indicated by Ta'chin coming first.

[3] Mingana, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. IX, p. 325.

that Christianity was then, and had been for at least some generations previously, either the dominant religion of the state or that it occupied a very important position therein, and yet not a word of this is found in any Chinese record.[1]

It is admitted even by Kircher that had it not been for the discovery of the monument no trace would have remained of the previous existence of this branch of the Nestorian Church, the absence of all authentic records of the past history of China being so complete.

'If the framers of the boasted records which now pass for the ancient annals of China had had any conception that a Christian church once flourished in that empire, they might indeed have been expected to misrepresent the nature of the religion it taught and the conduct of its members, but they could not have suppressed all mention of the important changes which must have taken place when this religion enjoyed the favour of Chinese sovereigns,[2] and still more so afterwards when it was wholly subverted and extirpated from their country.'[3]

In the list of metropolitans given by Amr, China occupies the thirteenth place, but it does not of

[1] Wall, *Ancient Jewish Orthography*, Vol. II, p. 231.

[2] Wall uses the words 'became the professed creed of their sovereigns' but that is perhaps a little too strong although Saeki affirms that the famous general Kwo Tsze-yih prince of Fen Yang in Shensi who lived A.D. 697–781, became a Christian. Mingana identifies Kwo Tsze-yih with one of the four Christian Turkish kings already referred to. (Mingana, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. IX, p. 351.)

[3] Wall, *Ancient Jewish Orthography*, Vol. II, pp. 243, 244.

course, follow that the names are mentioned in order of priority of founding.[1] During the patriarchate of Timotheus, A.D. 778–820, a monk named Subaljesu from the monastery of Beth Abhe was sent as a missionary to the Dailamites. He was murdered while returning to Assyria to visit the patriarch.[2] Timotheus asked two brethren from the same monastery, Kardagas and Jaballaha by name, to take his place. They agreed and took with them fifteen monks from the monastery, of whom they afterwards ordained seven. Of these some were sent to China, and others to India.

With regard to the ordination of the seven monks referred to, Jaballaha wrote to Timotheus saying that, as many people had been converted, some of the monks who had come with them should be appointed as bishops over them. Timotheus replied: 'Since the ordination of bishops requires the presence of three bishops and you are in lands in which you cannot have this number, this opportunity is given to you by the word of our Master by whom everything is established and governed. Doubtless you have chosen each of the bishops and it is right for you and Kardagas to consecrate them. For the third bishop the book of the gospels should be placed on a chair on the right hand side, and by this rite, through the grace of God, make the consecration of the first bishop. The others can then be consecrated by three bishops. I hope that the divine Spirit may be with you in your consecrating.'

[1] Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, III, ii, p. 413.
[2] Idem, p. 478.

Nau says that, according to the Hsi-an-fu monument, there were prior to A.D. 781 Nestorian Christians in at least eight towns in China, five of which were situated in the west.[1] He thinks that there may even have been a church in every province and refers to a statement by Rubruck five centuries later to the effect that in his (Rubruck's) time there were Nestorian Christians in at least fifteen towns in China.

Saeki holds that the number was vastly greater than Nau indicates. According to him the Nestorians had no small share in the creation of that golden age of China, and through China these same western influences passed on to Japan.[2] During that period the capital of China was still Hsi-an-fu. Overland communication between it and the Graeco-Roman civilized countries around the Mediterranean existed long prior to A.D. 635, the date given for the arrival of the contingent of Nestorian missionaries referred to on the monument. The Japanese were consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, much influenced by the Nestorians and received Christian thoughts in Chinese garb during the whole of the T'ang period, and 'whether the Nestorians were heterodox or orthodox it is certain that their ethical and practical theology and their medical knowledge were the true sources of their success in China.'[3]

During the eighth and ninth centuries there was scarcely anything good in Hsi-an-fu, the great T'ang

[1] Nau, *L'Expansion Nestorienne en Asie*, p. 225.
[2] Saeki, *Nestorian Monument in China*, p. 118.
[3] Idem, p. 112.

capital, that was not introduced into Japan or copied sooner or later by the Japanese in their capital at Nara.[1] It was not until after the invasion of Japan by Kublai Khan, A.D. 1268–1281, that Japan began to assert her spiritual and material independence.

On two of the beams of the temple of Horyiyi, now in the Tokyo museum, dating from the seventh century, Prof. Sayce found inscriptions accompanied by crosses in an alphabet akin to Syriac.[2]

In the *Imperial Chronicles* of Japan, of date A.D. 797, reference is made to a visit in A.D. 736 by a Persian who with others was granted an audience by the emperor.[3] His name is given as Li-mi-i and he is said to have received imperial favours. No one knows who was Li-mi-i, but it is surmised that the name should be Mi-li (Mili), the physician, 'it being the term used for medicine and the other parts having become transposed. In Chinese there are many Li-mi just as in Persian there are many Mi-li.'

Saeki thinks that this Li-mi who visited Nara in A.D. 736 may have been the priest of Royal Balkh and father of Yesbuzid the chorepiscopus who erected the Hsi-an-fu monument in A.D. 781. Elsewhere there is reference to a physician called Rimitsu whose presence at the court of the Japanese Emperor Shomu, A.D. 724–748, has been established by Japanese scholars.[4] He may be the man referred to

[1] Saeki, *Nestorian Monument in China*, p. 145.
[2] Idem, Introduction by Sayce, p. vi.
[3] Idem, p. 62.
[4] *Church Quarterly Review*, Vol. LXXV, p. 312.

above as Li-mi or he may have been one of the 'others.'

Through the teaching of this Nestorian physician the empress Komyo herself appears to have been led to embrace Christianity. She was known as a great saint and wonderful miracles of healing were attributed to her. She is believed to have been a Nestorian.

The great niece of the Empress, Princess Chujchima, is reported to have entered a convent at Tacmadera, halfway between Aji and Yoshimo in Central Japan. She had a vision of heaven, and this she depicted in a large piece of embroidery which still exists.

There is no record to show how long there continued to be only one metropolitan for China, but about A.D. 1093 the Patriarch Sabrisho III appointed a certain bishop, George, to Seistan and from there transferred him to Khatai in North China—the fourth metropolitan see of the Far East.[1] Marcos, already referred to, one of the members of the embassy sent by the Mongol Il-Khan, Arghun, to Europe, was ordained metropolitan of this same see of Khatai and of Oug by the Patriarch Denha in A.D. 1280. His see apparently included not only a considerable portion of North China and Manchuria but also some of the Turks and Mongols, known as Kara Khitai.

Another metropolitan see of China mentioned in Syriac is that of the town of Kamul, called in

[1] Mingana, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. IX, p. 328.

Mongol Kamil and in Chinese Hami, which in A.D. 1266 sent its bishop John to the consecration of the Patriarch Denha. A fifth see mentioned by Amr is that of Khan Balik or Falik. Sachau thinks that Khan Balik here should be Jan Balik, that it was the administrative capital of the province of Sinkiang, and situated on the great north road from China to Kuldja.

The Nestorian monument contains the name of a bishop called John, but the place where he was bishop is not mentioned. Rubruck refers to a Nestorian metropolitan seat in the city of Segin, assumed to be Hsi-an-fu itself, the great centre of Christianity in China in the eighth and ninth centuries. It was still an important centre four centuries later. John of Pian de Carpini refers to the Nestorians as Mongol scribes. In fifteen cities of Cathay he says there were Nestorians, and adds, 'They had an episcopal see in the city called Segin.'[1]

The northern provinces of China were under the rule of outsiders for about three centuries prior to the time of Kublai Khan. The first were the Kitans, known in China as the Liao or iron dynasty. Their rule lasted for 200 years and gave the name Khitai or Cathay to China.[2] The Kitans were succeeded by the Churches or Niu-chen, another Tartar race, and they in turn by the Mongols under Jenghiz and his successors.

[1] Rockhills *Rubruck's Journey to Tartary*, p. 150.
[2] Cordier, *Yule's Marco Polo*, I, p. ii.

South China continued under the native dynasty of Sung until subjugated by Kublai Khan who removed the Mongol capital from Karakorum to Khan Balik or Pekin and became the first ruler of a united China. During the period prior to the advent of Kublai Khan, Christianity was very widely spread throughout the greater part of China.

John of Monte Corvino, one of the Minorite or Franciscan Friars, who arrived in Cambalac (Pekin) in A.D. 1294, speaks of the Nestorians as being a powerful community in China at that time and complains that they caused him a great deal of trouble. He does not refer to the trouble that he caused them, but speaks of having been successful in winning over King George, a descendant of Prester John, and a large number of his people to the true faith (viz., Latin Christianity). He claims to have baptized 6,000 persons altogether, and adds that but for the Nestorians, it might have been 30,000.[1] He also bought forty boys, the children of pagan parents, with the intention of training them as choristers. When King George died his brothers and all his people reverted to Nestorianism again, or as Corvino put it, 'to their original schismatic creed.'

John of Monte Corvino was a pioneer Latin missionary. He claimed to have a knowledge of the language and characters generally used by the Tartars, and translated into that language the

[1] Robinson, *History of Christian Missions*, p. 170.

whole of the New Testament and Psalter, causing them to be written out in the beautiful Tartar script. From this it can be gathered that the Tartar script was in use in Pekin.

Carpini describes the Nestorians as being a people who professed the name of Christ but who deviated sadly from the Christian religion, and as having grown so powerful in these parts (Cambalac) that they would not allow a Christian of another rite to have ever so small a chapel or to proclaim any but Nestorian doctrine.[1] And yet in another place, speaking of an intoxicating liquor called 'cosmos' or 'kumis' made from mare's milk, he says 'Christians who wish to follow their religion do not drink "cosmos." If they do they are no longer considered Christians and the priests have to bring them back to the fold as if they had denied the faith of Christ.' Greek priests consulted about this, say that in the twelfth century this was a common belief among Christian Tartars. A man about to be baptized asked that he might be allowed to wait until the next day. He then said he could not possibly receive baptism as in that case he would not be able to drink 'cosmos' as no true Christian could do so, but that without this drink it was impossible to live in these deserts.

One writer states that the Nestorians in Cathay numbered more than 30,000.[2] He does not indicate to which part of Cathay he refers. The number in the

[1] Rockhill, *Rubruck's Journey to Tartary*, pp. 87, 97.
[2] Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither*, Vol. III, p. 102.

whole of China must have been much greater. This writer further contended that the Nestorians were rich, that they occupied various offices in the empire and were given great privileges. 'If only they would agree and be at one with the Minor Friars and other good Christians who dwell in that country' he said, 'they might convert the whole country and the emperor likewise to the true faith.'

In the great city of Iamzai (Yang-Chau-fu) there were three Nestorian churches.[1] A Nestorian Christian called Mar Sergius was governor of the province of Kiang Su in China, A.D. 1278–1280, and is said to have built two churches, and a large number of Christians are reported to have been killed in a rebellion at the town of Kan-fu, (probably Canton) in South China about the year A.D. 970.[2]

Prince Sempad, High Constable of Armenia, writing from Samarkand in A.D. 1246 said, 'we have found many Christians scattered all over the east and many fine churches, lofty, ancient and of good architecture, which have been spoiled by the Turks.'[3] In the town of Kinsay, the capital of the southern part of China, there was a Nestorian church. Kinsay, now known as Hangchau, was one of the nine divisions into which Manzi—as South China was called—was divided. The city itself was of immense size, and very wealthy. Each householder was

[1] Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither*, Vol. III, pp. 165, 166.
[2] Grant, *Nestorian Missions*, App. B.
[3] Yule, *Marco Polo*, Vol. I, p. 172, note. Also Vambéry's *History of Bokhara*, p. 17, note.

under obligation to place a list of the names of all the inmates over the entrance. They had a regular fire brigade with night patrols, and many hospitals and charitable institutions. The streets were wide and well paved and provided with a drainage system. There were also many other amenities provided, all going to show that civilization and culture were both very highly developed. This was during the reign of Kublai Khan, grandson of Jenghiz, who was, as already stated, the first emperor of a united China. According to Marco Polo, Kublai Khan was the most powerful sovereign who had ever existed. He was equal in power to all the Christian powers in the world with the Saracens added. He was a man of benevolent and kindly disposition. He caused messengers to be sent to different parts of his dominions to carry relief to those who suffered from bad seasons or who had lost their cattle by murrain, etc. The highways were planted with rows of trees so that people might not lose their way. Where trees would not grow he built pillars of stone. A large number of poor pensioners were in receipt of wheat, etc., and at the public almshouses any one could daily receive a loaf of bread fresh from the oven. He supplied the poor with clothes, levying a tithe upon all wool, hemp, etc., for the purpose.

Religious toleration, orderly government and equal justice first came to the West from the Far East. One of Kublai Khan's most enduring monuments is the Grand Canal which joins the

capital with the more fertile districts of China, and to-day supports on its waters a huge population.

His summer residence, now in ruins, was situated eighty li to the north west of Dolonnor, which is known as the city of one hundred and eight temples but has been deserted for centuries.

The empire over which Kublai Khan ruled was certainly not lacking either in area or in population. It extended from the China Sea, almost, if not quite, to the Mediterranean, and included the greater part of the continent of Asia. Only Japan, the southern part of India, and probably Arabia, seem to have been excluded. Although not a Christian he treated the Christians with great kindness and consideration and gave them many privileges. It is with reference to Kublai Khan the story is told that he sent to the Pope of Rome in A.D. 1267 asking him to send a hundred missionaries skilled in the law to instruct him and his people. Whether Kublai Khan really made this request or not is very doubtful. If he did it can only have been to listen to disputations between rival sects, as there is abundant evidence that he could quite easily have consulted the Nestorian missionaries already on the spot had he so wished. Rubruck gives particulars of a discussion arranged between Christians, Saracens and Tuins in the presence of Mangu, his brother and predecessor. Kublai Khan probably wished for a similar discussion.

Even before the close of the eighth century the metropolitan seats established by the first Catholicos,

Papa, had been more than doubled and the gospel preached throughout the whole of the vast area of the Persian Empire, in Turkestan, Transoxania, Tibet and India, and throughout a great part of China and Japan. Whole peoples with their rulers had become Christians and been taught, in a measure at least, the principles of Christianity, and it seems certain that there were very few places in the whole of Asia that were not reached at some time or other as the outcome of the marvellous activity of that wonderful church which extended from China to Jerusalem and Cyprus, and in the eleventh century is said to have outnumbered the Greek and Roman churches combined.[1]

By the end of the thirteenth century Nestorian Christianity was so widely spread that Assemani gives a list of no less than twenty-seven metropolitan seats extending over the whole of Asia, and mentions two hundred bishops as being connected with them.[2]

The tolerant Tartar dynasty of the Mongols continued to rule in China until A.D. 1369, when it was succeeded by the persecuting Ming dynasty, under which Christianity once more suffered an eclipse from which it never recovered.

[1] Gibbins Mosheim, *History of Christianity in China*, p. 8.
[2] Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, III, ii, p. 503.

CHAPTER VIII

SEMIRYECHENSK CEMETERY INSCRIPTIONS

Although the proclamation of the gospel far and wide by these early Nestorian missionaries had such marvellous results, it does not follow that the spiritual life of the community was always on the crest of the wave—neap tides follow spring, and after every crest there is a trough.

There is no need to go further afield than our own highly favoured lands to find illustrations of this. The great awakening under Wesley took place after a period of great spiritual depression. The revival under Jonathan Edwards was preceded and followed by periods when the spiritual life of the church was at a very low ebb. The same is true of the Finney, Moody and A.D. 1859 revivals.

It was doubtless the same in the history of the Nestorian church. There must have been times when the church was on the crest of the wave, even if these were perhaps the periods of greatest trial when it cost something to be true to Christ. At other times, love may have grown cold and there may have been a certain falling away. Fortunately the Nestorians escaped the theological disputes that disturbed the peace of the West, although they had difficulties of a different kind to contend with, such as conflicts with the Manicheans and other dualistic sects. They had also to maintain a constant warfare

with the Magi, and later on must have suffered considerably at the hands of the Buddhists.

It may have been the case, however, that there was a falling off both in piety and in learning in the later centuries. Rubruck, who visited China about the middle of the thirteenth century (A.D. 1253) says of some of the clergy that they were so ignorant that they could not even understand the Syriac in which their books were written, and that they were very corrupt, great usurers and drunkards, and that some of them, following the example of the Tartars, were polygamists, and adopted also certain practices that were observed by Muhammadans. Such conduct, he said, resounded throughout Tartary and caused a great aversion to Christianity.

Fortunately there is no necessity to depend on the testimony of Rubruck, or any other, for information as to the state, of some at least, of the Nestorians at the time written about. Their own testimony at first hand in the inscriptions on the tombstones which have but recently been discovered is sufficiently conclusive.

These are described by Prof. D. A. Chwolson in *Memoires de L'Academie de St. Petersbourg*, VII series, Volume XXXIV—4 (A.D. 1886) 'Vorläufige Nachricht über die in dem Gebiete Semirjetschie aufgefundenen Syrischen Grabinschriften,' in Volume XXXVII—8 of the same series, and in still a third Volume issued in A.D. 1896 and referred to by Dr. Mingana as Vol. III.

Two ancient cemeteries fifty-five kilometres apart, which contain tombstones with inscriptions indicating

that they were those of Nestorian Christians, have been discovered in the province of Semiryechensk, Southern Siberia. The smaller of the two was discovered in the year A.D. 1885 by Dr. Porjakow. It lies fifteen versts to the south of the village of Great Tokmak, and one and a half versts from the ruins of an old burnt-brick fortification, called Burana, on the Alexander road. All of the first stones which were found had crosses, though not all had inscriptions.

The second graveyard was discovered later by a surveyor named Andrew. It is distant ten versts from Pishpek and contained altogether 611 stones. Tokmak is near the outflow of the river Chu. Pishpek is in the neighbourhood of the same river but fifty versts further to the north west. They are close to lake Issyk-kul in the province of Semiryechensk. Lake Issyk-kul has been called the 'Dead Sea' of Central Asia. It is one hundred and twenty miles long and forty broad, but instead of being below sea level as is the case with the 'Dead Sea,' the valley in which it lies is 5,300 feet above sea level and is surrounded by vast mountain ranges. It is known among the people of west Turkestan as Tuzkul, the salt lake, as well as Issyk-kul, the hot lake. As the result of hot springs the temperature is as high as 85° to 95° Fahrenheit. Because of this, although situated in a very cold region, the water never freezes. From lake Issyk-kul, washed ashore by storms, came the iron ore from which the famous Samarkand scimitars and daggers were made.

That the province was densely populated prior to the Mongolian period is proved by the ruins of many fortified places and settlements. The remains of sunken towns are also visible in the water of the lake only a few feet under the surface, the level of the lake having been raised by geological changes that have taken place.

The greater part of the large graveyard has been cultivated, the stones having been removed to higher ground. In some graves more than one body has been interred and on some gravestones more than one name is inscribed. The Kirghiz who inhabit that part say that there are other large stones with crosses, and the remains of many old settlements, to be found in the valley of the Chu to the north west of Pishpek. Specimen stones and copies of the inscriptions on others, were sent to different societies in Paris, St. Petersburg and other places, in the hope that the members might be able to assist in the work of deciphering.[1] This was in some cases very difficult on account of the mixed nature of the characters in which the inscriptions were written, some of the names appearing both in Syriac and in Turkish. One large inscription of eleven lines had a number of peculiarly Turkish names.

Inscriptions dealing with Nestorians are in Syrian Nestorian script. The older form of this is comparatively easy, the later is more difficult. Another initial difficulty, was that the years were in cycles of

[1] Chwolson, *Memoires de L'Academie Imperiale de Sciences de St. Petersbourg*, Vol. XXXIV–4, p. 2.

twelve and were called by the names of animals, i.e., rat, ox, tiger, hare, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, hen, dog and pig. The dates of the inscriptions are spread over a period of one hundred years, from A.D. 1249 to A.D. 1345, and include Christians from the neighbouring town of Almalig as well as from the immediate neighbourhood.

There were two stones which Chwolson at first thought belonged to an earlier date, dating back to the ninth century, but of this he is now a little doubtful. The majority of the inscriptions indicate that they not only refer to Nestorian Christians, but that these were of Turkish descent.[1] 'Gravestones in the form of a cross have also been discovered in Manchuria, and Nayan, king of that country, was a Christian and had inscribed the sign of the cross on his banners.'[2]

It has already been referred to, that in the fifth century when multitudes of those who held by the teaching of Nestorius were driven from their homes in Roman Syria and Mesopotamia, great numbers of them crossed over into Persia. Having secured a home in that country 'they thence rapidly propagated their religion, and with it the Syrian system of letters, through the wide extended regions of Tartary, so that by this route, at a very early period, they reached even China.'[3]

[1] Chwolson, *Memoires de L'Academie Imperiale de Sciences de St. Petersbourg*, Vol. XXXVII-8, p. 106.
[2] Mingana, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. IX, p. 334.
[3] Wall, *Ancient Jewish Orthography*, Vol. II, p. 246.

The Nestorian priesthood were held in high esteem as scholars, secretaries and physicians at the court of the Sassanides and of the Caliphs in Baghdad. Learned Nestorians were sent to Byzantium to collect Grecian writings that had not yet been translated, and to bring writings, already translated into Syriac, so that they might be translated into Arabic. There is a long list of such scholars who introduced Greek culture through translations and commentaries, to the Muhammadans first, but, indirectly, also to medieval Europe.[1]

As the result of the conquest of China by the Mongols, Christianity again entered on a period of expansion in that empire in the thirteenth century, after a time of comparative depression. The Mongolian princes were tolerant towards other religions. Chwolson confirms what has already been said that several Mongolian princes had Christian wives. The princes often attended service in the churches with their wives, but they were hindered, Chwolson says, from making an open profession of faith in Christ by the strife which arose as the result of the coming of Roman Catholic missionaries to China in the middle of the thirteenth century.[2]

Beginning with the Ming dynasty in the third quarter of the fourteenth century (A.D. 1369) a change took place in the attitude of the Chinese towards foreigners and Christians. This resulted, in

[1] Chwolson, *Memoires de L'Academie Imperiale de Sciences de St. Petersbourg*, Vol. XXXIV–4, p. 27.
[2] Idem, Vol. XXXVII–8, p. 108, 110.

a short time, in the almost complete extinction of Christianity in China. Chwolson, however, confirms what has already been said regarding the wide range of Nestorian missionary activity. Among the Turkish tribes alone, he claims that the area, inhabited chiefly by Turks or Tartars, over which the gospel had been preached, extended from longitude 60° to longitude 120° and from latitude 30° to latitude 50°, and that without exaggeration there must have been 'millions' of Christians in these areas of which the only remaining traces are these genuine Christian grave inscriptions.

From them, however, much can be learned, not only about the Christian and church life of that great community, but also about other things of primary importance.[1] The records that we have in these inscriptions are authentic and trustworthy, and there need be no hesitation in accepting what they tell us.

The crosses, of different kinds, engraved on all the stones, are so formed that the head of the cross is easily distinguished from the foot, from which we can determine whether the writing was horizontal or vertical. Most writers on the subject are agreed that the west Syrians at a certain period wrote in vertical lines, and that then, turning the book, they read horizontally. The inscriptions on the monuments confirm this. The Uigurs, who got their alphabet from the Nestorians about the eighth or ninth centuries, also wrote vertically, and from left

[1] Chwolson, *Memoires de L'Academie Imperiale de Sciences de St. Petersbourg*, Vol. XXXVII-8, pp. 111, 113, 116.

to right, as did the Mongolians and the Manchus, differing in this respect from the Chinese, who wrote from right to left.

To-day there are four or five different kinds of Syrian writing which are easily distinguished. It is doubtful, however, if there was the same clear difference in olden times. The language of the inscriptions is mainly Syriac, but some are in Turkish or include Turkish phrases.

These Christians had good schools and good teachers. They had earnest preachers and spiritual leaders, distinguished for their learning as well as for their piety. Their laymen looked upon it as an honour to act as church officials, to serve the church and to attend to the nurture and Christian growth of its members.[1]

'This is the grave of Pasak—The aim of life is Jesus, our redeemer,' runs one inscription. Pious wishes for the future life of the dead, for their everlasting remembrance, and for the rest of their souls in the company of the pious and the righteous, are frequently found on tombs. Often the deceased persons are described on the stones as being wise and learned, and reference is also made on some to the part played by the person referred to in the political life of the community. One of the persons thus commemorated is described as the renowned Emir, and the title of General or commander-in-

[1] Chwolson, *Memoires de L'Academie Imperiale de Sciences de St. Petersbourg*, Vol. XXXVII-8, p. 124.

chief had evidently been in his family for two generations.

'The Christian community of that almost lost corner of the earth must have been fairly considerable, because among the about three hundred gravestones of men published by Chwolson there are nine archdeacons, eight doctors of ecclesiastical jurisprudence and of biblical interpretation, twenty-two visitors, three commentators, forty-six scholastics, two preachers and an imposing number of priests.' [1]

No bishop's name occurs in the inscriptions, probably because these congregations were connected with some other centre such as Almalik, and the headquarters of the church were there. Almalik was the capital of the Chagaton Khanate or middle empire of the Tartars. In thirteen years, from A.D. 1287 to A.D. 1300, six people are described as from Almalik. One of these was a chorepiscopus and two were archdeacons. The son of one of the latter and the daughter of the other were also buried there.

Several chorepiscopi, a periodeuta and at least eight persons with the title sa'ara are referred to. According to Ebedjesu the three titles, chorepiscopus, periodeuta and sa'ara apply to one and the same office. The duty of the bearer of these titles was to visit the churches and see that all was well with them and to build up congregations that had fallen off. It was also part of his duty to visit villages and smaller

[1] Mingana, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. IX, p. 334.

congregations, to gather the elders around him, to admonish them, and remind them of their duties, to read the scriptures, to gather the children together, pray with them and arrange about their education. The person appointed to this office was chosen because of his piety, his uprightness and his incorruptibility. From the names one can easily gather the nationality of the bearers.

Of the different clergy of various grades, eight or more had children. One almost certainly was betrothed, while of another it is said that he had a wife. From this it is clear that the higher Nestorian clergy were permitted to marry, and indeed if they became widowers after their ordination they could marry a second time. Several of them either had genuine Turkish names themselves or they gave their children Turkish names.[1] The assumption that they were genuine Turks is probably correct.

A woman is described as 'Terim the Chinese,' a priest figures as 'Banus the Uigurian,' a layman as 'Sazik the Indian.'[2] Then we have 'Kiamta of Kashgar,' 'Tatta the Mongol' and 'Shah Malik a son of a George of Tus.' 'All these names imply a constant intercourse between the different Christian peoples of Central Asia and the Far East' which enables us to understand how in a single cemetery there lie, side by side, people from China, India,

[1] Chwolson, *Memoires de L'Academie Imperiale de Sciences de St. Petersbourg*, Vol. XXXVII-8, p. 125.

[2] Mingana, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. IX, p. 335.

East and West Turkestan, Mongolia, Manchuria, Siberia and Persia.[1]

It would be easy to mention names gathered from these inscriptions of men who were distinguished for their pious zeal, who were teachers, or who devoted themselves to the studies of the cloister, and all of whom were genuine Turks.

Taking into consideration the rawness, wildness and barbarity of the Eastern Turks, one cannot but be impressed with the change that the gospel message had brought about in their lives.[2] Some of them had double names, one either Syrian or Christian and the other Turkish. One can safely assume that the people who lived in the neighbourhood of the graveyards were almost wholly Turkish Christians, for, although there were a few Syrian Christians amongst them, the mass of the population was Turkish.

There were public schools, but these schools, as was customary with the Nestorians, were church schools and were often connected with the monasteries. There were evidently cloisters there also, as it is said of two of the clergy that 'they enlightened all cloisters with their light.'[3]

In the Catalan map of A.D. 1375 we find a cloister, or monastery, indicated as lying to the south of lake Issyk-kul. It is called the Armenian monastery of St. Matthew. It is more probable, however, that it was Nestorian, as it is unlikely that

[1] Mingana, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, p. 335.
[2] Chwolson, *Memoires de L'Academie Imperiale de Sciences de St. Petersbourg*, Vol. XXXVII-8, p. 127.
[3] Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, III, ii, p. 934.

the Armenians had any cloisters in that neighbourhood.

The subjects taught in these schools have already been indicated, but in addition to those mentioned, Syriac must have been taught as a language subject. It was evidently not an easy language to these Turks for some of the inscriptions are most inaccurately written. One of these Uigur Turks, as has been shown elsewhere, actually became in A.D. 1281 patriarch of the whole Nestorian church. Huc claims that this same man, Jaballaha, afterwards acknowledged the headship of, and submitted to the Pope of Rome; of this however, there is no indication or confirmation in any quarter whatever. The rumour probably arose from the fact that Jaballaha's great friend Cauma was sent as an ambassador from the Persian king to some of the European princes, and, amongst other places to Rome.

Different persons are described in the inscriptions as church administrators, one as a renowned church administrator. Of others it is said that they zealously sought the welfare of the church. One is spoken of as a renowned exegete and preacher. Their wisdom is extolled. Of another it is said that his voice in preaching was lifted up like a trumpet.

The inscriptions indicate also that the people knew how to value such men. 'With hope of the life hereafter and with pious wishes for their eternal rest' were they laid in their graves. In one inscription comes the phrase 'The soul (of the dead) is made whole.' Students are also referred to.

Frequently the word 'believer' is added at the end of the inscription and parental tenderness is shown by the words 'a beloved youth or maiden.' One already referred to is spoken of as 'the blessed old man.' He evidently occupied a high official position, due probably to the fact that the mother of Hulaku, who then reigned, was a Christian princess and was said to have been zealous and pious and to have exercised a noble influence on her son.

Belonging to the years A.D. 1338-1339 are three inscriptions in which it is stated that the persons referred to died of plague, and the number of inscriptions during these years is exceptionally large. Plague is said to have originated in Eastern Asia just about that time.[1] It spread rapidly to Asia Minor, North Africa and Europe, and reached the Crimea in A.D. 1346. The loss of life in Europe alone in this pandemic is estimated at twenty-five millions, or a quarter of the whole population. What must it have been in Asia with its much greater area and population?

An inscription numbered '44' is important as introducing a new element. It reads thus:—'In the year A.D. 1333, that is the cock year. This is the grave of the scholar San-da-jok, the boy Pazak Tekin, and the young girl Marian.' Then come the words, 'These three have died in Muhammadanism.' This might mean that they went over to Islam and died as Muhammadans, but Chwolson asks, if so, how

[1] *History of Medicine*, Vol. X, p. 512.

were the Muhammadans so tolerant that they allowed those of their faith to be buried in a Christian graveyard, and still more, to have a cross on the gravestone? How were the Christians so tolerant as to allow apostates a resting-place in their cemeteries and to erect a gravestone with a cross on it over the graves? The three might have been compelled to become Muhammadans and in that case, since force had been used, their fellow believers might continue to look upon them as Christians. Or they may have been compelled to accept Islam and then been put to death. It is difficult to tell, but the last alternative seems at least quite possible.

The Tokmak inscriptions are fewer in number, but here also there is evidence of spiritual life. 'The house of rest' is a phrase very frequently used. And we can well believe that the picture of the spiritual and religious life of the Turkish Christians in the neighbourhood of Pishpek, which these inscriptions give, had its counterpart in many other Turkish Christian congregations in that and other districts.

The fight against Buddhism which was all around, and the growing conflict with Muhammadanism, may have helped to raise the tone of the Turkish Christian life, and in places where a metropolitan had his head-quarters it may have been more developed than in other places. But all quite evidently continued to give a definite testimony to the genuineness of their Christian profession which may well act as a stimulus to Christians more favourably situated to-day.

It has already been mentioned that no inscriptions have been found in the cemetery at Pishpek of an earlier date than A.D. 1249. It is possible that this is a mere chance and that all the stones have not yet been properly examined. But the same is not true with reference to the final date of A.D. 1345. It seems more than possible that Christianity in east and west Turkestan, just as in China, ceased to exist soon after that date.

All the good accomplished by Nestorian missionaries during seven centuries among this wild and barbaric people was swept away and vanished, leaving scarcely a trace.[1] Only in the grave stones from Semiryechensk do we find evidence of the rich and varied Christian life which prevailed in one tiny corner of these extensive areas, filled, as they once were, with Christian communities.

The following are a few of the inscriptions that have so far been deciphered. Others also are given by Chwolson in the *Memoires* which have been quoted from. Others again are given by Nau in *L'Expansion Nestorienne en Asie*, and there are still others that have not yet been translated.

No. 66 (138)[2] 'This is the grave of chorepiscopus Ama. In the year 1566 (A.D. 1255) he departed from this world in the month of July on

[1] Chwolson *Memoires de L'Academie Imperiale de Sciences de St. Petersbourg*, Vol. XXXVII–8, pp. 131, 140.

[2] Chwolson says this inscription differs from others in that it does not begin with the date as is usually done, and states not only the month but the day of the week. A part of it is not quite clear.

Sabbath. May our Lord unite his spirit with those of the pious and upright. Amen.' [1]

No. 83 (127).[2] 'In the year 1583 (A.D. 1272) that is the ape year. This is the grave of the priest and general, Zuma—a blessed old man, a famous Emir, the son of General Giwargis. May our Lord unite his spirit with the spirits of the fathers and saints in eternity.' [3]

No. 84 (218). 'In the year 1584 (A.D. 1273). This is the grave of the church visitor Pag-Mangku, the humble believer.' [4]

No. 123 (155). 'In the year one thousand six hundred and twelve (A.D. 1301, the bull year). This is the grave of the priest Taki who was very zealous for the church.' [5]

No. 18. 'In the year one thousand six hundred and eighteen (A.D. 1307) that is the sheep year.' (Turkish, koi=sheep). This is the grave of the charming maiden Julia, the betrothed of the chor-episcopus Johanan.' [6]

No. 39 (192). 'In the year one thousand six hundred and thirty-nine (A.D. 1338) that is the dragon year. This is the grave of Pesoha the renowned exegetist and preacher who enlightened all

[1] Chwolson, *Memoires de L'Academie Imperiale de Sciences de St. Petersbourg*, Vol. XXXIV–4, p. 14.

[2] Chwolson remarks: 'This inscription has a special historical interest. It is otherwise known that Nestorian Christians acted as teachers, tutors and especially as secretaries to the Mongolian princes, but we can see by this that Nestorian Christians in two successive generations had commanded troops and that one of them is described as a famous Emir.'

[3] Chwolson, *Memoires de L'Academie Imperiale de Sciences de St. Petersbourg*, Vol. XXXIV–4, p. 24.

[4] Idem, p. 25. [5] Idem, p. 46. [6] Idem, p. 51.

cloisters through the light—Extolled for wisdom and may our Lord unite his spirit with the saints.' [1]

No. 50[16] (30). 'In the year one thousand six hundred and fifty (A.D. 1339) the hare year. (Turkish, tabischkau=hare.) This is the grave of Kutluk. He died of plague with his wife Mangu-Kelka.'

'In the year one thousand six hundred and twenty-seven (A.D. 1326) which is the year of the dragon. (Turkish "lowū"). This is the grave of Shliha the celebrated commentator and teacher, who illuminated all the monasteries with light; son of Peter the august commentator of wisdom. His voice rang as high as the sound of a trumpet. May our Lord mix his pure soul with the just men and the fathers. May he participate in all heavenly joys.' [2]

'In the year 1616 (A.D. 1315) which is that of the Turkish snake. This is the grave of Sabrisho, the archdeacon, the blessed old man and the perfect priest. He worked much in the interests of the church.' [3]

[1] Chwolson. *Memoires de L'Academie Imperiale de Sciences de St. Petersbourg*, Vol. XXXIV–4, p. 69.
[2] Idem, p. 14. Mingana, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. IX, p. 335.
[3] Chwolson, Vol. III, of 1896, p. 16, No. 52.

CHAPTER IX

FACTORS IN THE DECADENCE OF NESTORIAN MISSIONARY ACTIVITY: PERSECUTION—DECEPTION—COMPROMISE

Persecution: The decadence of the Nestorian church was due to a variety of causes which were largely a repetition of the history of the early church as recorded in the *Acts of the Apostles*.

One of the reasons, and that not the least in importance, was the spread of and persecution by Muhammadanism. Reference has already been made to the measures taken by the successors of Muhammad to give effect to the alleged dictum of the prophet that Arabia was to be reserved for Islam, and that there should be only one creed there; a policy which was only too successfully carried out.

Ishoyabh II, patriarch of Seleucia A.D. 628–643, is said to have entered into an agreement, first with Muhammad and later with the Caliph Omar, by which he obtained important concessions for Christians of his persuasion, and Muhammad is said to have given a document in which he promised safety to all Christians living in his dominion.[1]

In it there were mutual obligations recognized as binding on Muhammad on the one hand and on the Nestorian and Monophysite Christians on the other.

[1] Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, III, ii, p. 95.

He not only promised to protect them but also guaranteed them entire religious freedom, and, in return, they promised him loyalty and obedience, and undertook to support him against the attacks of his enemies.

The successors of Muhammad employed the Nestorians in the most important affairs of business connected with the court and the administration of the Persian provinces; and only to the patriarch of the Nestorians was permission given to dwell within the limits of the kingdom of Babylon.

When the last emperor of the Sassanian dynasty was defeated by the Muhammadans, about the middle of the seventh century, the way was opened up for a further extension of Muhammadan power, and the armies of Caliph Omar speedily overran the whole of Persia from the Euphrates to the Oxus, destroying with bigoted fury 'all that was useful, grand or sacred in that unhappy country.'

There was not the same antagonism on the part of the Muhammadan Arabs towards Christianity in Persia as towards their fellow countrymen in Arabia, and yet, as already indicated, the disqualifications under which Christians laboured, and the confiscation of whole or part of their property that almost invariably took place, all tended to discourage the profession of Christianity, and resulted, in many instances, either in wholesale secessions to Muhammadanism, or emigration to other lands.

A large proportion of the conquered inhabitants, including, as we know from other sources, numbers

of nominal Christians, adopted the faith of their new masters, while others fled into more distant places. The ruins of the many cities scattered abroad indicate the existence, at one time, of a dense population in regions which are now inhabited by a few wandering tribes. According to Malcolm, even a catalogue of these ruins, and of the bridges which once ornamented the Tigris, alone would fill many pages.[1]

Some of the ruins are no doubt the work of the Turks and Mongols, to whom reference is made later, but in the earlier centuries the desolation was the result of the influx of Muslims from Arabia, and other Bedouin tribes that flocked to their standard.

In the north-western parts of Persia there are few traces left of the ancient splendour of that once wonderful land.[2] Tabriz, the capital of Media, rivalling at one time the glory of Ecbatana (modern Hamadan) has only the tombs of Mordecai and Esther to satisfy curiosity, while the site of Rhe (ancient Rhages) can hardly be traced.

Persia, under the Caliphs, included Kerman, Balkh, Bokhara, Seistan, Khorasan and Afghanistan.[3] Under the Sassanian dynasty it had been even more extensive, and included the Pamirs, Kafiristan, Kashgar and Scind, and extended to the Oxus and the Indus in the east, and to the Caspian Sea and mount Caucasus, on the north. It embraced numerous mountain chains and large tracts of arid

[1] Malcolm, *History of Persia*, Vol. I, p. 259.
[2] Idem, p. 260. [3] Idem, p. 262.

desert, interspersed with beautiful valleys and rich pasture lands.[1] Some of the valleys, although narrow, were one hundred miles long and extremely fertile, and in those early days must have been very densely populated.

A recent writer has said that it was the rise of Islam that enabled the Nestorians to enter 'upon that amazing career of missionary enterprise which must make the patriarchate of the East for ever glorious.'[2] And, as if to lend colour to this extraordinary statement, Dr. Mingana, of the John Rylands Library, Manchester, has recently discovered a document, on the strength of which it is held that 'however, imperfect official Islam may have been in some social aspects, statutory intolerance was not among its defects.' The document is described as a 'charter of protection granted to the Nestorian church A.D. 1138 by Muktafi II, Caliph of Baghdad.'[3] It is, however, really a charter recognizing and confirming the election of 'Abdisho' III (A.D. 1138–1147) to the office of catholicos and patriarch of the Nestorians and includes the customary references, described as 'statutory prerogatives,' to the protection by the Caliph of life, property, etc. Muktafi states that in granting the charter he was but following in the steps of all previous Caliphs. A document such as this may reflect the attitude of

[1] Malcolm, *History of Persia*, Vol. I, p. 2.
[2] H. C. Luke, *Mosul and its Minorities*.
[3] Mingana, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. X, pp. 127 to 132.

the particular ruler who issued it, but that it correctly describes that of Muhammadan rulers generally towards Christianity, or that the rise of Islam furthered the interests of the Nestorian missionary enterprise in the slightest degree, will not be claimed by any one who is at all familiar with the history of Muslim expansion. Reference has just been made to a somewhat similar pledge given both by Muhammad and by the Caliph Omar, but that did not prevent the atrocities and persecutions of which some of their successors were guilty.

As time went on the attitude of the Caliphs towards the Christians became more and more harsh.[1] Hārūn (A.D. 786–809) ordered Jews and Christians alike to adopt customs different from those of the Muhammadans, but this seems to have been enforced only in the capital, and then only for a short time.

A more serious persecution broke out under Mustawakkil, A.D. 847–861. He persecuted all sects, including even the Shias. The Christians were ordered to wear a distinctive dress, were dismissed from government employment, and forbidden to ride on horseback. The churches that had been built after the Arab conquest were pulled down, and the houses of some of the wealthy Christians turned into mosques. The government, however, could not get on without the services of the Christians, and after each outburst the latter

[1] *Cambridge Medieval History*, Vol. IV, pp. 285, 288.

returned to their posts in government offices (c.f. p. 232 for more recent illustrations of the same attitude on the part of Muhammadan rulers).

In A.D. 710 the Muhammadans, or Saracens as they were also called, having overrun the kingdom of Persia, crossed the Oxus into Transoxania.[1] At first their progress in Transoxania was very slow. The rich were strongly opposed to Islam but the poor were won over by gifts, and gradually the whole of the territory between the Oxus, the Jaxartes and the Caspian Sea was brought under the rule of the Caliph, and the Turkish hordes were driven back to the desert.[1]

Before the Saracen invasion the cities of Kharizm, Bokhara and Samarkand were rich and populous under the rule of the shepherds of the north (Tartars). They were surrounded by a double wall. The outer one, which was of large circumference, enclosed the fields and gardens of the adjacent district.

The first mosque in Bokhara was built in A.D. 712, but it was not until A.D. 771 that a second one was required, and even then the majority of the people were still unbelievers, that is, they were opposed to Islam.

In Transoxania, there was a mixed population of Iranians and white Huns who had been subdued by the Turks and acknowledged allegiance to the Chagan, but were under the immediate government

[1] Barthold-Stube, *Zur Geschichte des Christentums in Mittel Asien*, p. 20.

of local princes.[1] At the time of the Muhammadan invasion, there was an insurrectionary movement of the poor against the rich. The Saracens took advantage of this, and their success under Kutaiba, one of the Saracen generals, was due as much to intrigue as to force. Further, the Nestorian Christians there objected less to Islam, founded on the ancient Jewish scriptures, than they did to the fire worship of the Zoroastrians. They were, therefore, less likely to oppose Islam than they might otherwise have been.

Kutaiba finally completed the conquest of Sogdiana and then proceeded against Ferghana. Here the Saracens came into contact with Tibetan Buddhists who had revolted against the emperor of China, but the Turkish Chagan interfered and compelled the Tibetans to return to their allegiance, and the death of the then Caliph prevented anything further being done.

In A.D. 724 a Turkish army was sent to Sogdiana and defeated 20,000 Moslems near Samarkand. This event is commemorated in an inscription partly in Turkish and partly in Chinese on a monument found near lake Koshu Tsaidam, erected by the Chagan in memory of the victory won by his brother.

Ashras Ibn Abdullah, commander-in-chief of the eastern army of the Caliph, in A.D. 723 made great efforts to induce the Christians of Central Asia to embrace Islam,[2] promising them exemption from the

[1] Bury's *Gibbon*, Vol. V, pp. 439–441.
[2] Skrine and Ross, *The Heart of Asia*, p. 72.

capitation tax. Later on he re-imposed the tax and, as a result, many of the more recent converts to Islam rose in rebellion and seceded to the Chagan of the Turks.

It was not until the ninth century that Muhammadanism was fully established in Transoxania. The Arabs rather favoured the Nestorians as against the Jacobites, but treated both with great severity.

From A.D. 987[1] onwards, the catholicos or Nestorian patriarch of Baghdad was nominated and supported by the Caliph, and this whether the metropolitans approved of the appointment or not. From A.D. 1062–72 onwards, the Jacobite and Melchite bishops were made subordinate to the Nestorians.

When Ismail succeeded to the throne of the Samanides in A.D. 892 with Bokhara as his capital, he at once embarked on a holy war against the Christian settlement of Taraz, south of Aulie-ata, and when the Amir and many of the leading men of the place embraced Islam, Ismail converted the church into a mosque, and returned to Bokhara laden with booty.

The period of the Abbasides was a time of great literary activity, not only as regards the number of individual authors, but as regards the number of works issued by them. An index of Arabic books in every branch of knowledge was prepared in A.D. 988. It was about this time that Arabic began to

[1] Barthold-Stube, *Zur Geschichte des Christentums in Mittel Asien*, p. 24.

attain to the position of a world literature. Even the Nestorian and Jacobite Christians began to use Arabic as a literary language in preference to Syriac. Scientific and philosophic works were translated from Greek into Arabic, especially in the ninth century. Poetic literature, also grammar and history, were much in evidence. One of the most prolific writers on medical subjects was one Razi, who died in the early part of the tenth century. He was a skilled diagnostician and made distinctly original contributions to medical science. A vast medical literature in Persian began with an encyclopedia by a physician named Zain-ud-Din.

The Abbasid dynasty came into power largely through the assistance of troops from Khorassan who formed a complete division of the army. These may probably have been Muslims, but in A.D. 833–842 Mutassim added another separate corps made up entirely of Turks. He built enormous barracks for them and encouraged Turkish chieftains to come and live under his protection.

Gradually the Turks outnumbered every section of the army and grew in wealth and influence, until the power passed entirely into their hands and the Caliph was at the mercy of his Turkish guard. Fresh accessions to their numbers were continually coming from the East as the Turkish troops learned of the wealth and power that their fellow tribesmen could gain by service in the empire of the Caliph.[1]

[1] *Cambridge Medieval History*, Vol. IV, p. 285.

Many of the soldiers of the Caliph were slaves, the Caliphs being under the impression that, as they were without ties and kindred, they could be more thoroughly depended upon. The more obstreperous the Turks became, the more was the number of slaves increased as a set-off against them.

In A.D. 1042 there was something in the nature of a mass movement towards Islam on the part of the Turks, 5,000–10,000, according to different reports, of the inhabitants of Safer seceding to Muhammadanism.[1] Prior to this, Seljuk and his tribe had separated themselves from the rest of the Ghozz, and having gone over to Islam, had become the champions of those who were their comrades in faith against those who had hitherto been their comrades by race.

The Muhammadans, who lived in the town of Gend, not far from Syr Dariya, had been in the habit of paying tribute to the Khan of the Ghozz. Seljuk, however, drove out the Ghozz representatives and exempted the town from further payments.

The Seljuks were the first Tartar tribe of importance to become Muhammadan. They derived their name from Seljuk the founder of the tribe, a man of great reputation.[2] By the end of the tenth century, the unity of Islam, both politically and as a religious force, had been considerably weakened and the position of the Caliphate seemed hopeless. The

[1] Barthold-Stube, *Zur Geschichte des Christentums in Mittel Asien*, p. 50.

[2] *Cambridge Medieval History*, Vol. IV, p. 302.

rise of the Seljuks brought fresh support to the Caliphate, gave it a new lease of life, and saved Islam from destruction at the hands of the Crusaders.

The Seljuks had been employed as mercenaries under Sabaktagin as early as A.D. 976–997, but from A.D. 998 onwards when Mahmood succeeded his father Sabaktagin, and was recognized by the Caliph as ruler of Khorassan and Ghazni, they (the Seljuks) began to play an important part in the political life of the different Moslem states, to a greater extent, indeed, than Mahmood wished. The latter, we are told, became alarmed at the growing power of the Seljuks and threw Israel, one of Seljuk's sons, into prison, where he died.

Seljuk was originally subject to the khan of the Turks at Kipchack. Leaving there with his tribe about the end of the tenth century, he settled on the plains of Bokhara, and died there. The son who succeeded him was called Michael, a name so evidently Christian, as is Israel, that we are warranted in concluding that Christianity had been known there prior to the time of Seljuk, and that some of the tribe had become followers of Christ and had taken Christian names. It is said of Michael that he was able to provide 200,000 horsemen, if required, for the army of Mahmood.

After the death of Mahmood, the Seljuks asserted their independence and gradually extended their dominions further and further to the west. Togrul Bey, the third in succession, became master of Khorassan, and in A.D. 1055 captured Baghdad. He

compelled the Caliph to appoint him as his lieutenant, and soon thereafter completed the subjugation of Persia and invaded Georgia and Iberia. He became a zealous advocate of Islam and erected numerous mosques.

He was succeeded by his nephew Alp Arselan, which means a conquering lion, a bigoted Muhammadan and a violent persecutor of those who held the Christian faith. As a mark of ignominy he is said to have caused a large iron collar to be fixed on the neck of every Christian who refused to change his religion. He inflicted on them other cruelties also.

In A.D. 1156, the dynasty of Seljuk, after having ravaged and destroyed extensive territories, began to break up. Generals who had taken part in the subjugation of different countries began to assert their own independence. Amongst others, Salladin, the son of the commander of the fort of Tukreet, succeeded to the throne of Egypt, and soon all Syria submitted to his rule.

In Turkestan, Islam soon became widely spread.[1] This may have been due, partly to the conquests of the Sammanides, and partly to trade connections. The Sammanides colonized a part of their province with 1,000 families of Ghozz and Karlukians who had gone over to Islam. These they placed near the frontier to guard it against attacks.

[1] Barthold-Stube, *Zur Geschichte des Christentums in Mittel Asien*, p. 46.

Muhammadans were in the majority among the merchants, and lived along the trade routes.[1] There were mosques in nearly all the towns along these routes, and in some places Muhammadans occupied all the positions of authority, even although the population as a whole was non-Muslim. Where the Christians were in the ascendancy, on the other hand, the Muhammadan merchants had to pay taxes.

By the end of the tenth century, under the dynasty of Ilik Khan, the ruler of the Kara Khanides, the ascendancy of the Muhammadans had gained considerably both in east and west Turkestan. Whether the Kara Khanides were Uigurs as some think, or Karluks as claimed by others, is not at all certain. The capital was Balasaghun in the province of Semiryechensk. Balasaghun lay on the way from Almalik to Talas *via* Wjering. The city of Farab, or Otrar, famous as the place where three centuries later Tamerlane breathed his last, was also in the neighbourhood of Balasaghun.

According to Barthold, Vambéry is of opinion that after the eleventh century Muhammadanism took a preferential place to Christianity. The Christians had much to suffer from Bogra Khan and his successors in the religious wars that took place, but there is nothing to show that the Christians in the kingdom of the Kara Khanides were oppressed, and certainly Samarkand still continued to be the seat of a metropolitan.[2]

[1] Barthold-Stube, *Zur Geschichte des Christentums in Mittel Asien*, p. 47.
[2] Idem, p. 51.

The statement of Ibn-al-atier, that after A.D. 1043 only the Tartars and the Chinese Kitans continued unbelievers, is undoubtedly exaggerated, as at no time prior to that had all the Turks in west Turkestan accepted Islam.

A significant comment, however, on the decadence of Nestorianism in central Asia under the Moslems, is found in such remarks as the following, which occur not infrequently in Wiltsch: 'The metropolis of Maru Alsciahegian in Chorasania had its *last* metropolitan at the end of this period.'[1] 'The *last* metropolitan of Dailam lived in the time of the patriarch Mares II' (A.D. 987–999)—'The *last* metropolitan in the province of Bardaa lived at the time of the patriarch Ebedjesu III. At the same time lived the *last* metropolitan of Raia and Tabrestania.'[2] In A.D. 1073 'there was *no longer* either a metropolitan or a bishop in the two bishoprics of Achlat (on the western shore of lake Arsissa) and Marga.'

In the beginning of the twelfth century, the Sultan Sandchar of the Seljuk Dynasty appointed and deposed the Khans of the Kara Khanides in Samarkand. In A.D. 1141 the Keraites defeated Sandchar's army and overthrew the Kara Khanides.

The relations of Turkan Chatun of the Kangli tribe, who were settled in Khorazim, accepted Islam and were appointed by Shah Muhammad to various posts of honour, as can be seen from the military

[1] Wiltsch, *Geography and Statistics of the Church*, pp. 482 ff.
[2] Idem, pp. 163–168.

titles which some of them held prior to the advent of Jenghiz Khan.[1]

The Turks of Transoxania and Turkestan were a warlike people, and many of them, crossing the Oxus, had entered the service of the Caliph, attracted no doubt by the prospect of the plunder and booty which that service offered. Indifferent to Islam or even hostile to it in their own land, they looked upon it in Persia as merely part of their military discipline and soon submitted to its religious rule. When they returned to their own country they carried their religion with them, and this in process of time led to the formation of two different sections in the tribe or district—those who had become Muslims, and those who continued pagan or were already Christian.

So far as either the Turks or the Mongols were concerned, the fact of a man becoming a Christian did not weaken his sense of nationality. The nation was put first, and Christian and pagan alike were united in common loyalty to their country.

When they became Muhammadans, however, religion was put first, and gradually the Turkish rulers came to look upon the combining of the religious and political elements as one way by which their power might be increased, and acted accordingly.

As Muslims they were no longer neutral in religious matters, especially when it coincided with their political aims. Convinced too, not only that it

[1] Barthold-Stube, *Zur Geschichte des Christentums in Mittel Asien*, p. 59.

was their duty, but that the larger the number of Christians they could by force or persuasion turn from Christianity to Muhammadanism the greater the reward they might expect from God, it can easily be understood how these perverts to Islam became its most fanatical supporters and proved an important factor in the decay of Nestorianism in those regions where they exercised a controlling power.

INDIA. What was true of Transoxania and other parts of Central Asia was equally true of India. The first Muhammadan invasion of India took place in A.D. 1001 under Mahmood of Ghazni. Raid after raid followed and two centuries later they were firmly established in Delhi. Lower Bengal was conquered in A.D. 1203. At the end of the thirteenth century they began to press southwards into the Deccan. In A.D. 1293 Devagiri was captured and in A.D. 1297 Gujerat was attacked. Warangal was captured in A.D. 1309 (and finally fell in A.D. 1323), and Doarasamudra in A.D. 1310. With the accession of Muhammad Tuglak of Delhi in A.D. 1325 everything seemed to be leading up to the ruin and devastation of the Hindu provinces. By A.D. 1330 the whole of India down to the Vindhya mountains had been overrun, and what was left, although still under Hindu domination, was threatened with the same fate. The bloodshed was enormous. Sewell speaks of 100,000, 200,000 and even 500,000 persons slaughtered in a single campaign.

All that the dwellers in the south held most dear seemed tottering to its fall, when ' suddenly, about the

year A.D. 1344, there was a check to this wave of foreign invasion—a stop—a halt—and then a solid wall of opposition, and for two hundred and fifty years southern India was saved.'[1] The check was caused by a combination of three small Hindu states, Warangal, Doarasamudra and Anegundi. 'The solid wall consisted of Anegundi grown into the great empire of Vijayanagar' which extended from the neighbourhood of Honavur on the Indian Ocean to the mouth of the Godaveri on the Bay of Bengal, and the northern boundary of which for the greater part of its length was the Tungabadra and Kistna rivers.

'To the kings of this house all the nations of the south submitted including the Pandiyans at Madura, the Cholas at Tanjore and others.'

It is probable that not later than A.D. 1344, as the result of these Muhammadan conquests, Christianity had practically disappeared from the whole of India north of the Vindhya mountains, and from a considerable part of the Deccan on their southern side, the Christian kingdoms mentioned by Marco Polo as existing at the end of the thirteenth century being amongst the number of those submerged by the Muslim deluge. That South India escaped the same fate was, as stated, no doubt largely due to the stemming of the tide by the empire of Vijayanagar. When Vijayanagar fell the Muhammadan scourge resumed its course under Akbar, and later Aurangzeb,

[1] Sewell, *A Forgotten Empire—Vijayanagar*, p. 5.

but only to a limited extent, as new forces which acted as a check on Islam were by that time beginning to operate—first the Dutch followed by the French, and then the English.

Babar, the founder of the Moghul dynasty in India, was noted for his religious tolerance, which contributed to the place won by the dynasty in the temple of fame.[1] Akbar also and his son Jehanghir were both tolerant towards all religions including Christianity. One of Akbar's wives is said to have been a Christian, and he ordered his son, Prince Murad, when a child to take lessons in Christianity.[2] As regards Jehanghir, the Jesuits had great hopes that he would become a Christian, but the fact that he had a plurality of wives was a hindrance. Under Shah Jehan, the son of Jehanghir, on the other hand, a fierce persecution of both Christians and Hindus took place and continued for several years.[3] Aurangzeb who succeeded him was an equally bigoted persecutor.

That the decay of Christianity in central and northern India was due largely to subversion by the Muhammadans is confirmed by the fact that as late as A.D. 1784 Tippu Sultan,[4] the Muhammadan ruler of Mysore, forcibly circumcised thirty thousand Christians (some writers say fifty thousand) and removed them, and presumably their families with them, to the country above the Western Ghauts.[5] He

[1] Ronaldshay, *Bird's-eye View of India*, p. 225.
[2] W. W. Hunter, *The Indian Empire*, p. 295.
[3] Vincent Smith, *History of India*, pp. 369, 378, 396.
[4] W. W. Hunter, *The Indian Empire*, p. 255.
[5] *History of Telugu Christians*, p. 10.

harrassed the Christians in their hiding places and compelled them, under pain of having their ears and nose cut off, to abjure their religion and embrace Islam.[1] How many of the forbears of the more than a million Mapilla (Moplah) and other Muslims in the Malabar and South Canara districts of the west coast of India today were originally Christians, who similarly became Muhammadans under compulsion, we have no means of knowing. They are, however, now among the most fanatical and turbulent supporters of Islam. But for the bulwark raised by the empire of Vijayanagar and the coming in of the new factors mentioned, the fate of the remaining Christian communities in South India would probably have been in no wise different from that of those just referred to.

Deception: A contributing factor in the decline of Nestorian missionary activity, especially in India, was the deception which is alleged to have been practised by the Brahmins in the matter of the so-called Asoka pillar and rock inscriptions, and the invention of the Vishnu avatars, especially that of

[1] Kafiristan, one of the five provinces of Afghanistan, furnishes a still later example of the attitude of Muhammadan rulers towards a subject race. By a stroke of the pen in the British Foreign Office in 1896, Kafiristan was included in the boundaries of Afghanistan, and the Ameer, in consultation with Ghulam Haidar his commander-in-chief, immediately determined to convert the inhabitants to Islam, a purpose which he accomplished at the muzzle of the breach-loader.*

In the early centuries Kafiristan was a centre of Christian activity, and only fourteen years prior to 1896 the Kafirs of Hindu Kush had asked that teachers might be sent to instruct them in the religion of Jesus—a request that met with no response.

* Zwemer, *Islam*, p. 231.

Krishna. Chronologically these precede the Muslim invasion, but as they apply only to India it has been found more convenient to deal with them here.

It has been represented that Hinduism suffered a temporary eclipse during the period when Buddhism was in the ascendant in India, but that it ultimately re-asserted itself and drove out Buddhism. If, however, the claim made by Wall, Bentley, Hunter and others is correct, Hinduism, as known in later years, e.g., in the matter of Krishna worship and the caste system, dates only from about the eighth century A.D. or even later, Buddhism itself having been countenanced and made use of by the Brahminical party in the earlier centuries. This explains the statement by Clement already referred to (*vide* p. 105) that the Brahmins were those 'who obeyed the commandments of Buddha whom they honour as a god because of the holiness of his life.' It is further confirmed by the fact that in A.D. 413 a Chinese traveller named Fa Hien found the Brahmins and Buddhists working together in friendly co-operation,[1] but in A.D. 629 Hiuen Tsang, also from China, found Brahminism in the ascendant in some places such as Varanasi (modern Benares) although the Buddhists were still the more numerous in other places. The two parties were, however, beginning to draw apart and to be at variance with one another.[2]

In one place we read of an order having been issued that from that time forward no hospitality

[1] Macphail, *Asoka*, p. 62.
[2] Beal, *Buddhist Records of the Western World*, Vol. II, p. 105.

should be given to the Sramans (Buddhist ascetics), with the injunction to 'let this order be generally known and obeyed.'[1]

Ujjain had a Brahmin king well versed in heretical books, who believed not in the true law, but even in Ujjain there were 300 Buddhist priests. In Varanasi (Benares) there were thirty sangharamas (Buddhist monasteries) and 3,000 priests of the order of the little vehicle. There were also about 100 deva temples with 10,000 sectaries.[1]

In Kanchipura (Conjeeveram) Huien Tsang found some hundreds of sangharamas and 10,000 priests (all belonging to the great vehicle). There were, however eighty deva temples and many heretics called nirgranthas (the go-nakeds).[1]

ASOKA. One of the outstanding legendary personages in connection with the spread of Buddhism in India is Asoka, whose edicts inscribed on pillars and rocks, are found scattered over an area extending from Peshawar in the north to Mysore in the south, and from Kathiawar in the west to Orissa in the east.[2] The date assigned to the edicts is 257–232 B.C. Asoka, who is said to have belonged to the Maurya dynasty, is, on the strength of the edicts alone, alleged to have ruled over the greater part of India during the time mentioned, and having ultimately become a member of the Buddhist priest-

[1] Beal, *Buddhist Records of the Western World*, Vol, II, pp. 45, 229, 270.

[2] Macphail, *Asoka*, pp. 43, 72.

hood, to have carried the Buddhist doctrines in person to countries far distant from his own.[1] It is admitted, however, that very little is known about him personally except what can be gathered from the rock and pillar inscriptions,[2] nor is anything known of the Maurya dynasty after his death.

He is supposed to have been the grandson of Chandragupta, who was known to the Greeks as Sandrokottos. (Chandragupta is thought to have begun his reign in 321 B.C.) That there was ever such a person as Asoka, or such a kingdom as he is said to have ruled over, is disputed by Wall, who claims that the edicts originated with the Brahmins of Ujjain in the third century A.D., and were promulgated by them for the purpose of checking the progress of Christianity which was then spreading rapidly.[3]

Wall mentions several reasons why he questions the truth of the claim made to an earlier date than the end of the third century A.D. for the publication of the edicts. To begin with, statements made in the inscriptions are themselves inaccurate and contradictory, e.g., Tablet 2 of Girnar inscriptions reads: 'The dominions of Antiochus the Greek Raja of which Antiochus' generals are the rulers.' Tablet 13 reads: 'The Greek king—by whom the Chapta kings Ptolemaios and Antigonus and Magas (have been induced to permit) that everywhere the people

[1] Macphail, *Asoka*, p. 44.
[2] Idem, p. 19.
[3] Wall, *Ancient Orthography of Jews*, Vol. II, pp. 409, 411.

may follow the doctrines of Devanampiya.' That is, these kings and Antiochus were contemporary with one another. But the only Antiochus who had to do with India was Antiochus the Great. He invaded India 205 B.C., one hundred years after the time assigned to Asoka by the Buddhists of Ceylon, twenty-seven years after Asoka's death according to Vincent Smith, and ninety-six years after the death of the only Antigonus who likewise had any connection with India. Not only so but the date of Antiochus' invasion was fifty-two years after the death of Magas and forty-one years after the death of Ptolemy. Other reasons adduced by Wall are: the fact that the alphabet employed in writing the edicts could not have been in use, until after the Christian era, as proved by its Roman ingredients. This, the state of preservation of the vowel marks in the Delhi inscriptions, and the separation of the words into distinct groups of letters to a degree not at all observable in any ancient writing, are all so many arguments in favour of a much later date for the inscriptions than that usually claimed for them.

For these and other reasons Wall holds that the age of the inscriptions cannot be more than three-fourths the age of the inscription on the Rosetta stone. This points to the beginning of the fourth century A.D. as the extreme limit of their antiquity.

All the longer inscriptions purport to be edicts by 'the beloved of the gods, king Piyadasi.' They contain phrases manifestly of Christian origin. For example, 'I pray for those who differ from me in creed

that they may with me attain unto eternal salvation.' 'Through the conversion of the humbly born shall religion increase.' 'I acknowledge and confess the faults that have been cherished in my heart.' 'This is true religious devotion that it shall increase the mercy and charity, the truth and purity, the kindness and honesty of the world.' 'Good and proper is dutiful service to mother and father, towards friends and kinsfolk, towards Brahmins and Sramans. Excellent is charity. Prodigality and malicious slander are not good.'[1]

The confession of faults, strict scrutiny of sin, self-denial, repentance, faith, veracity, purity, chastity, honesty, benevolence, mercy, charity and condescension to those of low degree, are all recommended either by precept or the example of Piyadasi, while hard heartedness, malice, anger, pride, envy, slander, etc., are all condemned.

The inscriptions might have been written by an Indian Christian who still retained part of his pagan superstitions.

Wall is of opinion that the edicts are 'not the edicts of a sovereign but the compositions of a set of designing priests' as in evident from the following additional considerations.

So far as they are sermons or religious discourses, they are suitable subjects, not for royal decrees, but for priestly exhortations.[2]

[1] Wall, *Ancient Orthography of the Jews*, Vol. II, pp. 420, 426.
[2] Idem, p. 432.

They promulgated nothing that has to do with the interests of the sovereign or the kingdom, but much that is for the benefit of the priesthood.

They are not in the style that would be used by an eastern monarch. He would not be in the least likely to condescend to tell the public his reasons for a tax in the edict in which he commanded its payment. The edicts are inscribed on rocks and pillars over an immense area, and are nearly all in the same language, but no such monarch or kingdom as is indicated in them existed in India in or about the time to which these inscriptions are supposed to refer. Megasthenes says that India in his day (306 B.C.) was made up of 118 independent kingdoms, and Arrian, writing 450 years later, speaks of the Indian states as numerous. Vincent Smith says complete political unity of India under the control of a paramount power is a thing of yesterday.[1] If the inscriptions were written in the lifetime of the persons referred to, one questions whether a Graeco-Syrian king would be spoken of in the way that 'Antiochus the Greek Raja' is referred to. This is evident if we compare the corresponding expression in the Greek part of the Rosetta record, where the most fulsome adulation is paid to crowned heads.

Confirmation of the view that the Asoka pillar and rock inscriptions probably date from a much later period than has usually been assigned to them,

[1] Vincent Smith, *History of India*, p. 5.

is to be found in the modification of opinion that has taken place as regards the date of Buddhistic and Brahminical structures.[1] An illustration of this is to be found in the cave temples at Ellora in the Nizam of Hyderabad's Dominions. In an article dealing with these, Watts refers to the tendency which formerly existed to believe that the excavation of these temples extended over a long period, one religious faith succeeding another in regular sequence, and only one set of temples being in use at one time.[2] Ferguson, he says, is inclined to think that the different religious bodies, Buddhist, Brahminical and Jain, were all contemporaneous and worshipped together. According to Watts the different temples, Buddhistic and Brahmin, probably date from A.D. 600 (the date assigned to the Vishwakarma, the most famous of the Buddhist group) to the beginning of the eighth century A.D. (the date assigned to the Tin Tal cave). The most of the cave temples of the Mahayana Buddhist sect at Ajanta were excavated between A.D. 500 and 650.[3] In the same period

[1] How legends such as that of Asoka originate and grow may be illustrated by the case of Abraham Lincoln referred to by Leon Guerard in his book, *The Napoleonic Legend.*

Abraham Lincoln, he says, is becoming the centre of a legendary cycle. 'Leave Lincoln entirely to literature, art and folklore for a few generations, and you may be sure that all the proverbial wisdom of his age will be ascribed to him, and miracles and portents will be recorded. Lincoln is no longer Lincoln. He is democracy, emancipation, national unity.' Here we have an 'actuality of American history unfolding under the observation of the present age.'

In some such way the legend of Asoka may have grown up, fostered by Brahmins and Sramans (Buddhists) alike, working together, as they did in the first few centuries of the present era.

[2] Watts, Article *Ellora Caves*, 'Hindu' of 10-2-1925, p. 5.

[3] Ferguson, *Cave Temples of India*, pp. 298–9.

the Brahmins began the excavation of caves which rival those of the Buddhists. The Mahavallipur rathas and caves, which are Brahminical, were excavated probably between A.D. 650 and 700.[1] The Brahminical age of cave excavation came to an end in the eighth century.

THE KRISHNA LEGEND. Not content with the fabrication of these edicts or perhaps because they had failed to accomplish the end aimed at and something more was required, the various avatars of Vishnu and particularly the Krishna legend were next invented.

For the exposure of this deception one is indebted to Bentley in his *Historical View of Hindu Astronomy*. This book was published in A.D. 1825, but there has just been published as 'No. 18 *Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India* (A.D. 1914)' a treatise by G. R. Kaye on Hindu Astronomy, in which he refers more than once to Bentley's researches, and speaks of his *Historical View of Hindu Astronomy* as a valuable book though marred by intemperate language and impatience of opposition. Kaye does not challenge any of Bentley's findings, but on the contrary confirms such of them as he specifically refers to. Of one such, he says, Bentley's 'main conclusion is undoubtedly correct,'[2] and again 'his main thesis was fully established.' He supports Bentley in his contention that Hindu astronomy, so far from having

[1] Ferguson, *Cave Temples of India*, pp. 399, 402.
[2] Kaye, *Hindu Astronomy* (1924) pp. 3-5.

any claim to great antiquity is of comparatively recent origin, and holds that from A.D. 400 onwards it was dominated by the Greek system of astronomy introduced into India about that date, while the *Surya Siddhanta* dates only from A.D. 1000. 'Most scholars,' he says, 'Indian and European,' unless influenced by sentiment 'accept the judgment of the expert in this matter.'[1]

According to Bentley, modern Hindu astronomy with its wonderfully ancient dates was invented by the Brahmins of Ujjain in A.D. 538, the initial date being March 21st of that year.[2] They were in possession of all the learning in the country and their influence was so great that they had no difficulty in carrying out their plans.[3]

The greatest blow of all 'levelled by the Brahmins against Christianity and the *ne plus ultra* of their schemes, was the invention of the avatars, or descents of the deity, and others in various shapes, and under various names, particularly that of Krishna.'[4]

Seeing that the Christians acknowledged that Christ was an incarnation of the deity, and that God the Father had sent him down to earth to show special favour to men, and to redeem them from

[1] Kaye, *Hindu Astronomy* (1924), p. 39.

According to Sir W. W. Hunter the rise of Hinduism dates from about A.D. 750. The Saivites attained their zenith in the ninth century under Sankara Acharya. The Vishnuvites date from the eleventh century, the date of the *Vishnu Purana* being about A.D. 1045, when the Vishnuvite doctrines were gathered into a religious treatise. The disintegration of Buddhism extended from A.D. 300 to A.D. 1000. (W. W. Hunter, *The Indian Empire*, pp. 191, 212, 216.)

[2] Bentley, *Historical View of Hindu Astronomy*, p. 83.

[3] Idem, p. 108.

[4] Idem, p. 109.

sin, 'the Brahmins invented, not one but several incarnations and descents of the deity as having taken place among them at various times, thereby making it appear that they exceeded the Christians, and all other nations, by far, in point of favour of the deity.'

In confirmation of this conclusion, Bentley succeeded in obtaining the janampatra (or horoscope) of Krishna, from which it is made to appear that Krishna was born on the 23rd day of the moon of Sravana, in the Lunar Mansion, Rohini, at midnight, on the meridian of Ujjain, which instant the moon, Mars, Mercury and Saturn were in their respective houses of exaltation. The Moon in Taurus, Mars in Aries, Mercury in Virgo and Saturn in Libra, that the sign Taurus was then rising, Jupiter in Pisces, the Sun in Leo, Venus, and the Moons ascending node in Libra.[1] This fixes the date as August 7th, A.D. 600, which is therefore, the earliest possible date for the invention of the Krishna legend. The latest may be given as probably about A.D. 750.

The fabrication of the incarnation and birth of Krishna was no doubt meant to answer a particular purpose of the Brahmins who were sorely vexed at the progress that Christianity was still making and were afraid that if it were not checked they would lose both their influence and emoluments.[2]

They probably concluded that by inventing an incarnation of deity nearly similar in name to Christ, and making parts of his history and precepts agree

[1] Bentley, *Historical View of Hindu Astronomy*, pp. 110, 111.
[2] Idem, p. 112.

with those in the gospels used by eastern Christians, they would be able to represent to such of the people, as might be disposed to become Christians, that Christ and Krishna were one and same. In proof of this they would point to the fact that the Christians retained in their books some of the precepts of Krishna, but were wrong in the time they assigned to him, as Krishna, or Christ as the Christians call him, lived as far back as the time of Yudhisthira and not at the time set forth by the Christians.

'Therefore, as Christ and Krishna were one and the same deity, it would be ridiculous in them being already of the true faith, to follow the imperfect doctrines of a set of outcastes who had not only forgotten the religion of their forefathers but the country from which they originally sprang.' And further that Krishna himself in the 'Gita' had said 'that a man's own religion though contrary to, is better than the faith of another, let it be ever so well followed.'[1]

That the Gita itself is indebted to the New Testament scriptures for its finest sentiments has been conclusively proved by Dr. Hopkins, Professor of Sanscrit at Yale University, in his *India Old and New*, pp. 155–7. He bases his decision on the striking and numerous parallels between the Gospel of St. John and the Gita. A number of these as quoted by Howells are subjoined.[2]

[1] Bentley, *Historical View of Hindu Astronomy*, p. 113.

[2] Howells, *The Soul of India*, p. 529.

'All things were made by Him. John i. 3.
All things have their source in me. Gita vii. 6–8.

That was the true light. John i. 9.
I am the light of Sun and Moon. Gita xv. 12.

The world was made by Him and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own and His own received Him not. John i. 10–11.
Men distraught know me not in my highest nature. I take a human form and they honour me not. Gita ix. 11.

Whosoever believeth in Him should not perish. John iii. 16.
He that believeth in me doth not perish. Gita ix. 31.

Without Him was not anything made. John i. 3.
I am the seed: without me is nothing made. Gita x. 39.

My Father worketh even until now and I work. John v. 17.
There is nothing for me to attain and yet I remain at work. Gita iii. 22.

(The Scriptures) are they that bear witness of me. John v. 39.
By all Vedas I am to be known. Gita xv. 15.

Everyone that . . . has learned cometh unto me. John vi. 45.
They that worship me come unto me. Gita ix. 25.

I know whence I came . . . but ye know not. John viii. 14.
I come through many births and thou also: I know them all: thou knowest them not. Gita iv. 5.

If a man keep my word, he shall never see death: whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die. John viii. 51; xi. 26.
They that trust in Me come to escape age and death. Gita vii. 29.
Also, he that truly knows My divine birth and work, on casting off this body is not born again but comes to me. Gita iv. 9.

The Jews therefore said unto Him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham? John viii. 5–7.

(He said to Krishna) Thy birth is later, earlier was the birth of Vivasvat: how then may I understand that Thou hast declared this in the beginning? Gita iv. 4.

I am the way and the truth and the life. John xiv. 6.

I am the way . . . the refuge, the friend, life and death, the support, the treasure, the eternal seed. Gita ix. 18.

Compare also

I am the first and the last and the living one. I hold the keys of life and death. Rev. i. 17–19. and Alpha and Omega, chapter xxii. 13, with

I am the beginning, the middle, the end, the wisdom of all wisdom, the speech of them that speak, the letter A among the letters, time imperishable, the creator, death and life. Gita x. 32–34.

Also the phraseology:

Ye in Me and I in you. John xiv. 20: so vi. 56 and xvii. 20–23.

In Him we live and move and have our being. Acts xvii. 18.

In Him are all creatures: all is pervaded by Him. Gita viii. 22.

If any worship me in loving devotion, they are in Me and I in them. Gita ix. 29.

He that loveth Me . . . I will love Him. John xiv. 21.

I love them that are devoted to Me: even as they are to me, so, I to them. Gita iv. 11.

He is dear to me. Gita vii. 17.

The world beholdeth Him not, neither knoweth Him. John xiv. 17.

I am not beheld at all . . . the world knows Me not. Gita vii. 25.

To this end have I been born, and to this end have I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth . . . That the world might be saved. John xviii. 37 and iii. 17.

I am born age after age for the saving of the good, and destruction of evil doers, and for the sake of establishing virtue. Gita iv. 8.

This is life eternal, that they should know Thee, the only true God, and Him whom Thou didst send. John xvii. 3.

He who knows Me, the Lord of the world is freed from all sins (i.e., gets life eternal). Gita x. 3.

These parallels, as Hopkins points out, are not drawn from a large number of different writings but 'are crowded together for the greater part into one short Hindu poem and into one gospel' and it would be difficult to conceive of their having 'sprung from independent sources.'[1]

Later legends connected with Krishna indicate in a still more striking way their indebtedness to Christianity. According to Weber in '*Indian Literature*' (p. 86), 'the birth and childhood of Krishna are embellished with notices that remind us irresistibly of Christian legends.[2] Take for instance, the statement of the *Vishnu Purana*, that Nanda, the foster father of Krishna, at the time of the latter's birth, went with his pregnant wife, Yasoda, to Mathura to pay his taxes: or the pictorial representation of Krishna in the cow stall or shepherd's hut, that corresponds to the manger: and of the shepherds and shepherdesses, the ox and the ass, that stand

[1] Howells, *The Soul of India*, p. 531. [2] Idem, p. 532.

round the woman, as she sleeps peacefully on her couch without fear of danger. Then we have the stories of the persecution of Kamsa, of the massacre of the innocents, of the passage across the river (Christophoros), of the wonderful deeds of the child, of the healing virtue of the water in which he was washed, etc.'

Of like character are the accounts given in the *Jaimini Bharata* of the raising to life by Krishna of the dead son of Dubasala, of the cure of Kubja, of her pouring a vessel of ointment over him, of the power of his look to take away sin, and other similar things.

Such references as these are sufficient to indicate the sources from which many statements in Hindu writings, which in themselves command assent, are derived. [1]

Bentley is of opinion that the whole of the incarnations were invented at the same time and that the Brahmins then destroyed all records that would contradict or expose the falsity of the statements

[1] Although Hiuen Tsiang (A.D. 629) travelled all over India and refers to various heretical sects, as he calls them, he does not once mention Krishna.

The Vedas described by Hiuen Tsiang were evidently different, as to content, from those that are in existence to-day. The Brahmins, he says, study the four Veda Sastras. The first called Shau (longevity) relates to preservation of life and the regulation of the natural condition. The second called Sze (sacrifice) has some similarity to the Yajur Veda. It relates to (the rules of) sacrifice and prayer. The third is called Ping (peace or regulation). It relates to decorum, casting of lots, military affairs and army regulations. The fourth is called Shu (secret mysteries). It relates to various branches of science, incantations and medicines. The Vedas of to-day are very differently described. The Rig Veda is an historical collection of ancient songs and the other three borrow very largely from it. Beal, *Buddhist Records of the Western World*, p. 79.

made, and set about the forging of new books to give currency to the ideas which they wished to circulate. Real Hindu history and chronology were, he holds, completely destroyed by the chronological system invented in A.D. 538. Indian astronomy according to Nau, in spite of the fabulous antiquity which it claims, has nothing of importance which has not been borrowed from the Greeks. Even the image of Buddha was, he claims, created a long time after Gautama on the pattern of Greek models.[1] Bentley believes the *Ramayana* by Valmiki to have been written not earlier than A.D. 295 and the *Mahabharata* certainly not before A.D. 786 and probably not until A.D. 1157, and points out that some of the Vedas speak of Krishna which fact militates against their antiquity. From all this it seems evident that, so far, at least, as India is concerned, the introduction of the Krishna cult, combined with the development of the caste system, in the centuries subsequent to A.D. 600, must be included among the factors that contributed to the decay in the virility of Nestorian Missions.

Compromise. Another factor in the decline of the missionary activity of the 'Church of the East' was the growth of the spirit of compromise.

Adherents of different dualistic sects who were compelled to withdraw themselves from the Roman and Persian empires began to settle in Transoxania as early as the end of the third century.[2] Of these,

[1] Nau, *L'Expansion Nestorienne en Asie*, p. 210.
[2] Barthold-Stube, *Zur Geschichte des Christentums in mittel Asien*, p. 13.

the most numerous as well as the most highly organized were the Manicheans.[1] The next in numerical importance were the Mazdakites who were split up into several sections.[2] Others were Bardesanites, Marcionites, etc.

All these systems were dualistic in philosophy and both Bardesanites and Marcionites have been classed generally as Manicheans They were all alike antagonistic to Christianity. The Manicheans, in common with the Christians, were severely persecuted in the early centuries by both Romans and Persians. The Christians found a refuge in Khorassan, but the Manicheans had to go beyond the boundaries of the kingdom of the Sassanides into Transoxania and even as far as China.

All the different sects, including Christians, had their own alphabetic script which they carried with them, the foundation of each being Syriac. The

[1] F. C. Burkitt, *The Religion of the Manichees*, p. 3 ff.

Manicheans were so called from one Mani who on 20th March A.D. 242, began, in the streets of Ctesiphon, to proclaim a new religion of which he claimed to be the prophet, the paraclete, foretold by Christ. The message which he proclaimed was that 'there are two eternal sources or principles, light and dark: that by a regrettable mixture of dark with light this visible and tangible universe has come into being.' The object of the children of light is the gradual extinction of the world by the separation of the light particles from the dark substance with which it has been mixed.' Mazdakite was simply another name for Zoroastrian. Bardesanites were named after Bardaisan and Marcionites after Marcion, both of whom lived some time prior to Mani. S. Ephraim one of the Syriac fathers, who died A.D. 373, was of opinion that 'Mani's system was a fantastic reproduction of the heretical Christian philosopher Bardaisan and the heretical Christian churchman Marcion. Mani was put to death, by Bahram I, about A.D. 276, but, incredible as it seems, his philosophy, or his creed, survived and spread with great rapidity over a considerable part of Asia. (F.C. Burkitt, *The Religion of the Manichees*, p. 74.)

[2] Nau, *L'Expansion Nestorienne en Asie*, p. 203.

alphabet used by the Christians had originally twenty-two letters but a few others were added. That of the Manicheans was somewhat larger. Suli, the script used in Transoxania, had thirty-two letters.

Under the dynasty of the Samanidas the dualistic sects had a great number of adherents.[1] After the decline of the Sassanides the Manicheans sought to return to Western Asia, but the Caliph Muktadir, A.D. 908–932, compelled them to go back whence they came, where they suffered considerable persecution at the hands of the Samanides. Their headquarters after that were at Samarkand. That Manicheeism exerted a wide spread influence in China in the early centuries is confirmed by the discovery in A.D. 1908 of a large number of manuscripts in a cave in Tunhuang, in the province of Kansu.[2] One of these is a Chinese translation of two short Manichean treatises, another, a hymn consisting of 309 words, includes a list of persons and books venerated by Christians.

After the dualistic sects came the Monophysites or Jacobites. Jacob Baradaeus began his labours in Syria and Arabia Petra in the sixth century, bringing new life to the cause of Monophysitism which was then at a low ebb. In the subsequent centuries the Jacobites, as those who held Monophysite views were thereafter called, spread throughout the whole of Persia and Central Asia and were a source of

[1] Barthold-Stube, *Zur Geschichte des Christentums in Mittel Asien*, p. 29.
[2] Robinson, *History of Christian Missions*, p. 163.

trouble to the Nestorians. The latter were violently opposed to them, and it was not until the middle of the twelfth century that the antagonism disappeared.[1]

In the year A.D. 1142 a reconciliation took place between Ebedjesu II, patriarch of the Nestorians, and Dionysius, primate of the Jacobites. From that time the two bodies granted mutual recognition to each other at every opportunity. In Mongolia also from then onward the Nestorians showed themselves much more tolerant of other sects.

This date probably marks a definite stage in the falling away from the high ideals which had previously distinguished them, with a corresponding diminution in missionary activity and a lessened ability to resist the persecution of the later Mongol rulers after they had been won over to Islam, and the still more terrible devastation wrought by Tamerlane. Yule holds that even by the end of the tenth century, owing to the growth of Manichean and other dualistic sects, Christianity had lost much of its spiritual force.[2]

The most dangerous opponent of Christianity, however, was neither Manicheeism nor Monophysitism but Buddhism. The latter has three main divisions. There is the Buddhism of what is called the little vehicle found in Ceylon, Burmah and Siam which, in its purest form, is agnostic but is now combined with animism and devil worship. Then

[1] Barthold-Stube, *Zur Geschichte des Christentums in Mittel Asien*, p. 25.
[2] Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither*, Vol. I, pp. 113–115.

there is the Mahayana Buddhism or Buddhism of the great vehicle, as practiced in China and Japan. 'The feature of the Mahayana doctrine is Universalism, the 'Larger Hope,' hence the name.' [1]

Lastly there is the Lamaistic Buddhism of Tibet which is animistic. It is what was formerly known as the religion of Fo, a cult in which the teachings of Pythagoras were combined with those of Christianity after the manner of Neo-Platonism. In Rockhill's *Rubruck's Journey to Tartary* we read that when he visited the camp of the Mongol emperor he found on the way and at the place itself Lamas who were priests of the religion of Fo.[2]

Of all the Buddhistic systems Lamaism is the most corrupt and degrading. The portraiture on the interior walls of the temples in Tibet is, it is said, so vile that 'the very camera plate may not be defiled by exposure in these abodes of the prime wisdom of Satan.' The priesthood itself is described as a 'sink of iniquity.'[3] This was the system which contended with Christianity, and that so successfully, that, from being a strong centre of Christian influence with its own metropolitan, Christianity, in the centuries subsequent to the Mongol domination, ultimately disappeared from Tibet altogether 'leaving its traces only in some strange parodies of church ritual twined into the worship of the Tibetan Lamas.'[4]

[1] Macphail, *Asoka*, p. 62.
[2] Guignes, *Histoire des Huns, Turki, etc.*, Vol. II, p. 240, Vol. IV, p. 26.
[3] C. H. Coates, *The Red Theology in the Far East*, p. 157.
[4] Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither*, Vol. I, p. 172.

The Buddhism of China and Japan developed along different lines. It borrowed largely from Christian doctrine even to the extent of emphasizing salvation by faith, minus, however, the Christian doctrine of the atonement or any reference to a Saviour who died for men or 'was delivered for our offences.' Reference is made in a subsequent chapter to the effect of Christian teaching on the Chin-tan-Chiao and other secret societies of China, and the Amida and other similar sects of Japan. The converse was doubtless also true. If Christianity exerted a liberalising influence on Buddhism, it in turn had a similar effect on Christianity. Evidently there was a levelling up on the one hand and a levelling down on the other. The spirit of compromise was abroad. It was a question of give and take. Not perhaps that there was any formal departure from, or denial of, fundamental doctrines, but less emphasis was probably laid on these than their importance demanded, and the influence of the Nestorians on the non-Christians among whom they lived and their power to exert a restraining influence on the Mongol storm about to burst on Asia was correspondingly decreased. The note of urgency and definiteness which had been so characteristic of their message in the early centuries had disappeared, the Laodicean period in their history had set in. The result was that in countries such as China and Japan, which had escaped the Muhammadan deluge, Buddhism became largely the dominant religion, even if it shared its power with other less virile

systems, and Christianity was blotted out as with a sponge.

NOTE. To appreciate how this spirit of compromise must have affected the spiritual life of the Nestorian Church we need only look at some of the happenings in the mission field of to-day where the same spirit is again at work.

Reference has just been made to the Lamaistic Buddhism of Tibet. Lamaistic Buddhism has two politico-ecclesiastical heads. One of these, the Dalai Lama, resides in Lhasa and is a temporal as well as spiritual monarch. The other, the Panchen or Tashi Lama, residing at Tashi-lumpo, is of equal authority with the Dalai Lama in matters spiritual but has little or no voice in matters temporal. In the spring of 1925 the Panchen Lama paid a visit to Pekin.[1] A reception in his honour was arranged by leading missionaries there (two foreign and one Chinese), two of them members of the staff of the Christian Theological faculty of the Yenching University. The reception took place on Easter Sunday 1925, in the spacious second court of the Ying Tai palace, Pekin, in the presence of an audience of about thirteen hundred people. Two Christian choirs and one Buddhist were present and took part in the exercises. The speeches included an address of homage, to the spiritual representative of Lamaism, by the presiding missionary, a doctor of divinity, which concluded by wishing him (the Panchen Lama) success in fulfilling the mission of Gautama the Buddha, Jesus the Christ (in the order named) and all holy men, and on behalf of the audience asked him as the 'Living Buddha' for a 'message which they might carry with them as they journey together the pathway of life.' The Panchen Lama, in complying with this request, gave an exposition of Buddhism and closed with an invitation to his hearers 'to embrace Lamaism without delay and to study the Buddhist sacred books.'

The Japan Advertiser published in Tokio, had a leading article some time ago on 'The Religious Fellowship Society,' a federation, it is said, of members of Christian, Buddhist, and Shinto faiths. The purpose of the fellowship is to make common cause 'for the realization of righteousness and the good of humanity.' It is a purely ethical movement with the 'Cross of Christ' and all that is implied in it left out. 'Leaders in Christian, Buddhist and Shinto faiths are' said to be 'enthusiastic over the future of this new co-operative move.'

A professor in a missionary college in India is advertised as the compiler of a book of *Religious Instruction*. The book is in three parts. Part I comprises nearly one-half of Dr. Annie Besant's translation of the *Bhagavad Gita* (Hindu), Part II consists of extracts from the *Gospels of Mathew and Luke*, and Part III is made up of selections from the *Quran* (Muhammadan).

'One of the foremost leaders among missionaries in India,' addressing a Y.M.C.A. gathering of non-Christian students, is reported to have impressed upon his audience that he was in full sympathy with all religions and had worshipped with Jews, Muhammadans, Unitarians, Theosophists, Brahmo Samajists and others, and would have done so with Hindus also if their ceremonial customs had permitted it. Missionaries were not in India, he said, 'to convert the people to Christianity but to

1 C. R. Coates, *The Red Theology in the Far East*, p. 159.

make them better Hindus, better Muhammadans and better Buddhists.' (*Indian Thinker* of April 15th, 1925 quoting the *Nottingham Guardian.*)

The Student Movement April 1925 refers to an International Fellowship Retreat held in Bombay with a Muhammadan as chairman when addresses were given by a Polish Jew, a Parsee professor, a Hindu lecturer and a Scotch presbyterian. It was claimed that barriers of race and creed had been surmounted and that there was no Hindu, Muhammadan, Parsee, or Christian but that all alike were one family of God's children. A report of the first Retreat of the Fellowship has since been issued and is warmly commended by the editor of a *Christian Weekly* published in Bombay under the auspices of six of the leading missionary societies at work there—English, Scotch, and American. He invites his readers to attend the monthly meetings of the Fellowship—preferably as members. A specimen of the morning devotions of the Fellowship is also given. In the 'outline' there is first a passage from the Quran, to help the associated worshippers 'to realize the presence of God seeing His beauty in land and sea and sky.' Then a verse from one of Tukaram's hymns addressed to a heathen deity, is referred to. These are followed by extracts from the Psalms, the sermon on the Mount, the *Bhagavad Gita*, a passage from the Christian poet N. V. Tilak, and a few lines from Tagore's *Gitanjali*. The name 'Jesus' is omitted as is also the name 'Christ'. (The word 'Lord' is used by Christians and non-Christians alike)—(*Dnynodaya*, January 28, 1926.)

A writer in a recent magazine speaks of having attended a Sunday morning service at a Christian college in the East where a thousand students, young men and women, and several professors were present. The name of Jesus Christ was not once mentioned during the whole service and the preacher in pronouncing the benediction at the end closed with the words 'In the name of the great Leader.' (*Life of Faith*, 20th May, 1925).

Other instances might be given but in view of what has been said is it to be wondered at that an article should appear in a recent leading missionary magazine with the ominous title 'Are Foreign Missions at a standstill?'

CHAPTER X

ADDITIONAL FACTORS IN NESTORIAN DECADENCE. EXTERMINATION BY MONGOLS AND TAMERLANE—ABSORPTION BY ROMAN CATHOLICISM.

The Mongols. An important factor in the decay and final disappearance of Nestorian Christianity from central and northern Asia, including Turkestan and Mongolia, was the rise to power of Jenghiz Khan and the spread of Mongol domination in the first half of the thirteenth century. Not that the Mongols, so long as they remained unaffected by Muhammadanism, were in any sense antagonistic to Christianity; the reverse being the case. As has been shown elsewhere, there were many Christians among them. Some of their rulers were professed Christians and others were favourably disposed towards Christianity But in the devastation wrought by the Mongols, and in particular by Jenghiz Khan, Christians must have suffered in common with others. And when, as not infrequently happened, all the inhabitants of a city, in which there was a considerable Christian community, were put to death, as, for example, in the case of Bokhara or Herat, many Christians must have shared the same fate. It is not unlikely, however, that in some cases, as happened at the fall of Baghdad, Christians were spared and given an opportunity to escape.

Reference has already been made to the tribes that combined to form the Mongol confederacy. They owned great numbers of cattle and horses, lived in tents and wagons, engaged in hunting and fishing, and moved from place to place with their flocks and herds. Their predecessors were known to the people of the west as Scythians or Huns. They themselves were described indiscriminately either as Mongols, or Turks, or Tartars. Their savage life, frugality, endurance, skill in the chase, and horsemanship made them irresistible adversaries.[1]

> 'La gloire était leur nourriture
> Ils étaient sans pain, sans souliers,
> La nuit, ils couchaient sur la dure,
> Avec leur sac pour oreiller.'[2]

They penetrated China, overran northern India, and went as far as Egypt, Constantinople and Moscow. Leaving their upland haunts, they issued from the mountain passes to re-unite in the region of Lake Balkash, to the north of the Pamir. The Caspian Sea divided them into two bands. One, descending by the passage between the Caspian and the Pamir, arrived at the gates of Persia and India, the other, turning to the north, hurled itself on Russia and Europe.

'Clothed with skins and riding the wind and the tempest, they overturned in the twinkling of an eye' the strongest towns. They razed the walls and massacred their defenders. No sooner had news of

[1] Nau, *L'expansion Nestorienne en Asia*, pp. 239 ff.
[2] Idem, p. 240.

their arrival been whispered abroad, than, without a moment's delay, they seemed to spring up everywhere as if by magic.' Their chariots were like the wind. They covered the earth like the waters of a flood and no one could resist them.'[1] In the word 'ogre,' derived from the Tartar tribe of Uigurs, we have a reminder of the extent to which these dreaded foes penetrated into the very heart of Europe and of the terror inspired by the very name.[2]

The outstanding figure among the Mongols was that of Jenghiz Khan. He himself as already indicated of the Mongols generally, was not opposed to Christianity *per se*. A large proportion of his subjects was non-Christian but great numbers were Christian.[3] One writer speaks of having seen eight hundred chapels on wheels in one camp alone. He had a standing army of 600,000 men which was never idle.

From A.D. 1206 until his death in A.D. 1227 his career was one of expansion and conquest.[4] First he conquered the northern part of China, then Tangut to the west of the Yellow river. This was followed by the subjugation in A.D. 1214 of the Kin and Kara Khitai tribes of East Turkestan. He next turned his attention to the Shah of Khwarizm whose dominions extended from Kurdistan, Khuzistan and the Persian Gulf on the west, to the Indus on the east,

[1] Nau, *L'expansion Nestorienne en Asia*, p. 242.
[2] Taylor, *The Alphabet*, Vol. I, p. 300.
[3] Malcolm, *History of Persia*, Vol. I, p. 414.
[4] *Cambridge Medieval History*, Vol. IV, p. 632.

and included Azerbaijan, Irak, Fars, Kirman, Seistan, Khorassan and Afghanistan.

Piles of corpses, huge piles of bleached human bones, and blackened ruins of cities marked the track of his armies. Pity was unknown to the non-Christian Mongols. The most atrocious treachery, and disregard of oaths and promises of quarter were employed in their endeavour to hunt out and extirpate the scattered survivors of their barbarity.

Herat, having submitted to the forces of Jenghiz, was treated with great consideration. But the neighbouring fortress of Kaliouss, being jealous of it, plotted to make it appear that the Heratians had been guilty of treachery towards Jenghiz. In this they were only too successful, and Jenghiz returned to Herat determined to exact a terrible vengeance. He besieged the city, which fell into his hands at the end of six months. He put to death all the inhabitants, male and female, old and young. This occupied his army for seven days, at the end of which more than 1,600,000 had been slain. When he had gone, sixteen survivors made their appearance from drains and other places where they had been hidden. They were afterwards joined by twenty-four more from the surrounding districts, and for fifteen years the population of this once magnificent city numbered only forty persons.[1] At the end of that time it was rebuilt by Ogatai, the son and successor of Jenghiz.

The Mongol invasion (of Khwarizm) 'in its suddenness, its devastating destruction, its appalling

[1] Price, *History of Muhammadanism*, p. 531.

ferocity, its passionless and purposeless cruelty, its irresistible, through short-lived, violence .... resembles rather some brute cataclysm of the blind forces of nature, than a phenomenon of human history.[1]

'The details of massacre, outrage, spoliation, and destruction wrought by these hateful hordes of barbarians, who in the space of a few years swept the world from Japan to Germany, would be incredible were they not confirmed from so many different quarters.' Ibn-u'l-Athir, a Muhammadan historian, writing in the year A.D. 1220–21, says that the account was so horrible that he shrank from recording it, but at last consented to do so on the entreaty of his friends.

Never in all history had there been a calamity which approached or came near to it. Those whom the Mongols massacred in a single city exceeded in number, it is said, the whole of the children of Israel who went out from Egypt. City after city fell into their hands, Kashgar, Balasaghun, Samarkand, Bokhara and the like, the inhabitants being slain and the cities plundered and destroyed.

In the short space of a few years those Tartars had conquered a quarter of the habitable globe, including the most flourishing and populous part of it, and the part where the inhabitants were most advanced in character and conduct. Nor was there any country which had escaped their attentions 'which did not fearfully expect them and dread their arrival.'

[1] E. G. Browne, *Literary History of Persia*, Vol. II, pp. 427, 433.

So great was the terror inspired by them that a single horseman, entering a village or street in which there were many people, would go on slaying them one after the other, none daring to stretch forth a hand against him. One of them, it is said, took a man captive, and not having a weapon with which to kill him, ordered his prisoner to lay his head on the ground and not to move, and the man actually obeyed and lay quiet till the Tartar brought his sword and slew him.

One man reported that he and seventeen others were going along a road and met a Tartar horseman who ordered them to bind one another's arms. His companions proceeded to do as they were told. He said to them, 'He is but one, why then should we not kill him and flee?' but they answered that they were afraid. Then he said, 'This man intends to kill you immediately, let us therefore kill him.' Still not one of them dared to lift his hand, and he himself took a knife and slew their captor. They then fled and escaped. There were many such incidents.

The Mongols, 'surpassing in cruelty the most barbarous people . . . . . were animated neither by hate nor vengeance, for, indeed, they hardly knew the names of the people whom they exterminated.' Their only virtue was discipline. Subordination and obedience to their superior officers were carried to the highest degree.

'Droves of wretched and outraged captives accompanied the advancing hordes, and when the next point of resistance was reached, were first employed

to erect the engines of the besiegers, then driven forward at the point of the sword to the breaches effected in the city wall to fill with their bodies moat and trench, and finally, if they escaped death, were put to the sword to give place to a new batch of victims drawn from the prisoners yielded by the fresh conquest.'[1]

On Transoxania the storm burst in A.D. 1219. 'Otrar fell after a siege of five or six months. Its governor was taken alive and put to death by having molten silver poured into his eyes and ears.' The survivors of the massacre which ensued were driven to Bokhara 'there to be employed in the manner already described.'[1]

Various other cities were taken and sacked on the way, and in the beginning of A.D. 1220, Bokhara was taken, plundered and burned. Samarkand came next, surrendering on the fourth day of the siege, and shared the same fate. The next of importance was Khwarizm. With reference to it, one writer states that the besieging army numbered 50,000 and that each man was given twenty-four prisoners to kill, 1,200,000 in all.

Tashkent, Balkh, Nusrat-kih, Nasa, Nishapur and Merw all followed in quick succession, the same atrocious measures invariably following the capture or surrender of the town.

At the massacre of Nishapur (A.D. 1221) it is said that 1,747,000 were put to death.[2] The

[1] Browne, *Literary History of Persia*, Vol. II, pp. 434, 437
[2] Howorth, *History of the Mongols*, Vol. I, p. 78.

destruction of the city occupied fifteen days. It was razed to the ground and its site sown with barley. One writer gives the number slain at Merw as 700,000 but another asserts that the total numbered 1,300,000, 'not counting those whose corpses remained hidden in obscure retreats.' Bamiyan was so utterly destroyed that 'for a hundred years it remained a desert, void of inhabitants.'

The figures given are so enormous as to be almost incredible, but, even after every allowance has been made, the numbers slain must have been simply appalling.

All the towns mentioned were centres of strong Christian communities, some of them being metropolitan seats, and in the general slaughter many of the Christians must have perished with the others. The immensity of the populations of those cities enables one to form some idea of how thickly populated the country must have been before it suffered from those devastating scourges.

Juwayui is quoted as saying that in the Mussalman lands devastated by the Mongols 'not one in a thousand of the inhabitants survived,' and adds, that even if nothing happened until the resurrection to check the increase of population in Khorassan and Iraq-i-ajam, the population of these provinces could never attain the tenth part of what it was before the Mongol invasion.[1] The land was everywhere littered with bones. The Muslims, who under some of the

[1] Howorth, *History of the Mongols*, Vol. I, p. 101

Caliphs had attempted to extirpate Christianity from their territory, shared in the devastation caused by the Mongols. Under Jenghiz and his immediate successors they suffered terrible retribution. Jenghiz called himself the Scourge of God. As a matter of principle he favoured all religions equally but gave his adherence to none. He died in A.D. 1227, near the Sale river in Mongolia, just as he was setting out to reduce the southern part of China. The funeral escort that bore his body homeward slaughtered every person they met to prevent the news of his death becoming known.

Although he ruled with an iron hand he died at the height of his popularity. He excelled as an administrator, organized a regular system of posts and couriers, and rendered the highways safe for travellers. Clergy, physicians and learned men were exempt from taxes. He introduced the Uigur alphabet and caused his subjects to acquire the art of writing, codified the laws and customs of the tribes, and gave them legal authority. The laws were written in the Mongol language and in Uigur characters.

Jenghiz was succeeded by his son Ogotai, under whom the expansion of the empire continued and soon extended from the China Sea to the river Dneiper.

One of Ogotai's armies in A.D. 1235 invaded Korea. Another attacked the Sung dynasty in South China, while a third under Batu invaded Europe.

The first irruption of the Mongols into Western Asia and Europe took place in A.D. 1222, after they had destroyed the Khwarizm empire. They ravaged Transoxania, broke through the Caucasus and spread ruin and terror over southern Russia (known then as Kipchak), and the valley of the Volga as far north as Kazan. No words can describe the barbarities suffered by the wretched captives. Princes, bishops, nuns, children, all alike were slain with the utmost cruelty. The town of Novgorod was saved by a thaw which melted the ice and turned the country into a swamp. Koselsk was treated so severely that the Mongols themselves called the place 'Mobalig,' the town of woe.

In A.D. 1240 Kiev and other towns were destroyed, and the army then divided. One part marched through Poland. The other invaded Hungary which suffered overwhelming defeat at Liegnitz near Breslau. In all Hungary only three cities and fortresses escaped destruction.

It was not, however, until the arrival of a mission to the kings of France and England from the Ismaelians (a Muhammadan sect known also as the Assasins) who asked for aid against the Tartars, that the first reliable information about them was obtained.

Rubruck quotes the following description of these irresistible hordes from Matthew Paris's *Chronica Majora* published about A.D. 1240. 'That the choice of mortal men be not enduring nor worldly happiness long lasting without lamentations,

in this year (A.D. 1240) a detestable nation of Satan, to wit the countless army of the Tartars, broke loose from its mountain-environed home, and piercing the solid rocks (of Caucasus), poured forth like devils from the Tartarus, so that they are rightly called Tartari or Tartarians.

'Swarming like locusts over the face of the earth, they have brought terrible devastation to the eastern part (of Europe), laying it waste with fire and carnage. After having passed through the land of the Saracens, they have razed cities, cut down forests, overthrown fortresses, pulled up vines, destroyed gardens, and killed townspeople and peasants. If, perchance, they have spared any suppliants, they have forced them, reduced to the lowest condition of slavery, to fight in the foremost ranks against their own neighbours. . . .

'They know no other language than their own, which no one else knows. . . . They wander about with their flocks and their wives, who are taught to fight like men, and so they came with the swiftness of lightning to the confines of Christendom, ravaging and slaughtering, and striking every one with terror and incomparable horror.'[1]

The emperor Frederick II, writing to the kings of Christendom, frankly admitted that no one knew whence they had come. He hoped that by the combined forces of Christendom they might be driven down into their Tartarus.

[1] Rockhill, *Rubruck's Journey to Tartary*, p. xv.

In A.D. 1241 they invaded Hungary, Moravia, etc., and devastated Poland, Bohemia and the marches of Austria, but in December of the same year their emperor, Ogotai, died, and Batu and all the other leaders left for the great council at Karakorum to elect a successor. Although their armies remained in Hungary until A.D. 1243, and even sent divisions into Austria and Dalmatia, their great westward movement was stopped, and Europe, weak and divided as it was, was saved, 'although it knew it not but stood helplessly waiting the fatal blow.'[1]

Only recently have European historians begun to understand that the successes of the Mongol army, which overran Poland and occupied Hungary in the spring of A.D. 1241, were won by consummate strategy and were not due to a mere overwhelming superiority of numbers.[2]

'The Mongol claim to universal dominion was well known over Europe,' and no one doubted their ability to enforce it. The Pope of Rome proclaimed a crusade, exhorting the Germans to go to the help of the Hungarians. He also despatched Franciscan and Dominican missionaries to the Far East to preach Christianity to the Mongols in the hope of 'averting their onslaughts on Christendom through fear of divine wrath.'[3] At the same time he hoped to find out what were their plans as regards Europe.

He was encouraged in this by the conviction that there existed somewhere in the far east a great

[1] Rockhill, *Rubruck's Journey to Tartary*, p. xx.
[2] Bury's *Gibbon*, Vol. VII, p. 342.
[3] Rockhill, *Rubruck's Journey to Tartary*, p. xxi.

Nestorian Christian realm under the rulership of Prester John, and by the report that the 'Mongols themselves worshipped one God and were not without some religious belief.' The *Council of Lyons* which met at that time, convinced that the Tartars 'will surely come back,' advised and entreated all Christian people to block with ditches, walls, buildings or such other contrivances as might seem best, 'every road or passage by which the enemy could pass.'

Ogotai was succeeded by his son Guyuk, who, as we have already seen, was a professing Christian. It is worthy of note that under Guyuk the massacres and devastation which characterized the reigns of Jenghiz and Ogotai, neither of whom made any public profession of Christianity although they granted liberty of conscience to all their subjects, seem to have come to an immediate end, and it is a question whether the salvation of Europe from the Mongol menace, referred to in the previous pages, was not due to the fact that the death of Ogotai in A.D. 1241 was followed by the election of a Christian king to the throne of the Mongol empire rather than to any other cause.

Two of Guyuk's ministers were also Christians, and no doubt strengthened and encouraged their imperial master, if encouragement were needed, in his efforts to introduce Christian principles and practices into the government of the empire.

Guyuk died in April 1248, and was in turn succeeded by his cousin Mangu, son of Tulu, who was a brother of Ogotai. Hulaku, a brother of Mangu,

was appointed viceroy of Persia and sent on an expedition against that country, and Kublai, another brother, who later succeeded Mangu as emperor, was despatched on a similar expedition against China.

Hulaku Khan, after conquering the whole of Persia, proceeded westward and destroyed all that remained of the once celebrated empire of the Caliphs.[1] At the capture of Baghdad, 13th February A.D. 1258, from 700,000 to 800,000 persons were put to death, including the Caliph Mustasim and his only son, and treasures and materials, literary and scientific, accumulated during the centuries when Baghdad was the metropolis of the Abbasid Caliphs, were destroyed.[2] Persian writers say that the Tigris was swollen with waves of blood.[3] Nothing could exceed the barbarity with which those who held out against the Mongols were treated.

Horror and woe spread to the utmost confines of Islam as the result of the sack of Baghdad.[4] No such catastrophe had ever before befallen it. It meant a complete rearrangement of boundaries and centres of government, and was the prelude to the invasion of Syria. Aleppo was razed to the ground, death or captivity being the lot of the inhabitants. Damascus capitulated and was spared, but Antioch, although it surrendered, was destroyed. Terrible famine and pestilence broke out and completed the devastation of Syria.

[1] Malcolm, *History of Persia*, Vol. I, pp. 412, 421.
[2] E. G. Browne, *Literary History of Persia*, Vol. II, p. 423.
[3] Malcolm, *History of Persia*, p. 423.
[4] *Cambridge Medieval History*, pp. 638 ff.

Hulaku, as shown elsewhere, had a Christian queen and was favourably disposed towards Christians, but a grandson of his, Neekoudar by name, who had turned Muhammadan when he succeeded to the throne and had taken the name of Ahmed Khan, to prove the sincerity of his new profession became a violent persecutor of Christianity. Not content with destroying all the churches in the Empire he issued orders that *every Christian should be banished from his dominions*. How far he was able to carry out this policy of extermination we are not told.

The non-Christian Mongols of that place had for long been friendly with their Christian neighbours and opposed to the Muhammadans. They accordingly complained to Kublai Khan, who had by that time succeeded to the throne of the Mongols and was thus Ahmed Khan's superior. Kublai Khan threatened him with vengeance, but this does not seem to have had much effect, as Ahmed Khan actually seized and put to death his own brother through whom the complaint had been made.

Skrine and Ross name Barka, son of Juji, another grandson of Jenghiz, who had his headquarters at Sarac on the banks of the Volga, as the first ruling prince of the house of Jenghiz to become Muhammadan,[1] but Browne claims Neekoudar or Taqudar Ahmed Khan (A.D. 1282–84) mentioned above, and Ghazan Khan (A.D. 1295–1304) as the first.[2]

[1] Skrine and Ross, *The Heart of Asia*, p. 171, et seq.
[2] Browne, *Literary History of Persia*, Vol. II, p. 440.

The first period of Mongol ascendancy, extending from A.D. 1206–57, was the period of the great Khans, Jenghiz, Ogotai, Guyuk and Mangu, when the empire was governed from Karakorum by lieutenants sent out from there. The second period was that of the heathen Il-khans or Viceroys of Persia and Western Asia, which began with Hulaku, A.D. 1256, and ended with the murder of Baidu in A.D. 1295, the latter event coinciding with the accession to power of Ghazan Khan, who was a bigoted Muslim. Baidu was the third in succession to Ahmed.

The death of Baidu was largely due to his dislike of Islam and his liking for Christianity, while the first act of his successor was to make public profession of the Muhammadan faith and to destroy the Christian churches and Buddhist temples throughout Persia, and within ten years Islam, which had been suppressed by the earlier Mongol rulers, had again become the dominant religion in Persia.

The successors of Ghazan Khan continued Muhammadan, disappointing the expectations of the Christians, who had had great hopes of winning the Mongols to their faith and thus checking the progress of Islam. Two of the Il-khans of Persia, Taqudar Ahmed and Uljaytu Khudu-bandu, who in later years were both strong supporters of Muhammadanism, seem to have been baptized in infancy, and in each case under the name of Nicolas.

One of the results of the Mongol invasion was an extraordinary intermixture of remote peoples. Another was the breaking down of a hundred

frontiers and the absorption of dozens of states, so that travellers like Marco Polo were able to make known to Europe the wonders of the whole of Asia.

Mangu, the successor of Guyuk, died in A.D. 1259 and was succeeded by his brother Kublai, who, next to Jenghiz Khan, was the most famous of all the Mongols and the first ruler of a united China. He aspired also to the conquest of Japan, but his fleet was twice shipwrecked, with a total loss of 100,000 men, after which he desisted. He, however, secured the allegiance of Korea, Tonquin, Cochin China, Pegu, Bengal, Tibet, and even Ceylon.

Kublai Khan was of a very different disposition to some of his predecessors.[1] He sought to conciliate and govern by peaceful means, and was averse to bloodshed. The splendour of his court and the magnificence of his 'entourage' easily surpassed that of any western ruler. He was a patron of literature and later became a Buddhist. It is said that it was he who introduced ancestor worship into China. He is stated to have built a large temple in which Jenghiz, Ogotai, and other khans were honoured and worshipped. In A.D. 1264 he decreed that the Uigur alphabet should be discarded and a new national mode of writing invented because 'he deemed it beneath the dignity of the Mongols to use a script borrowed from foreigners.' The precise form that the new script took is not clear. It may have been a reversion to the old ideagraphic method, although

[1] *Cambridge Medieval History*, Vol. IV, p. 645 ff.

that is more likely to have taken place under the reactionary Ming dynasty a century later.

Kublai Khan, further, with the help of a Persian astronomer, drew up a calendar and founded an academy and schools. The Chinese classics were translated and a history of the Mongols drawn up. An administrative council of twelve was set up and the empire divided into twelve provinces with a view to decentralisation.[1] A postal service was maintained, and hostelries, horses, couriers and vehicles, provided throughout the empire. A new capital called Khanbalik (modern Pekin), to which Kublai removed from Karakorum, was built. The currency was reformed, block printing being utilized for paper coinage.

The army was reorganized and a system of roads and canals introduced, and trees were planted in many places for the benefit of the people.[2] These things indicate how far the Mongols had advanced. The nomads had become civilized but at the sacrifice of their military power. They lost their hardihood with their brutality. This was the beginning of the disintegration of the empire, and, as Howorth puts it, 'the process was hastened by their migration from the desert to the luxurious south, from Karakorum to Tatu and Shangtung, which Kublai effected and which speedily converted a royal race of warriors into a race of decrepit sensualists.'[3]

Kublai Khan died in A.D. 1294, at the age of eighty, after a reign of thirty-five years. The Mongol

[1] *Cambridge Medieval History*, Vol. IV, p. 646.
[2] Idem, p. 647.
[3] Howorth, quoted in *Cambridge Medieval History*, Vol. IV, p. 648.

dynasty continued in China until A.D. 1369, when the revolution, which resulted in the expulsion of the Mongols and the complete suppression or extirpation of the Christians in China, Nestorian as well as Catholic, by the Ming dynasty, took place.

Tamerlane. The final cause of the disappearance of Christianity from central and northern Asia and Mongolia is to be found in the devastation wrought by the Ameer Timour, known as Tamerlane. The name is a corruption of Timour lenk or Timour the lame. He was so called owing to a physical infirmity, the result of a wound in the foot received by him in one of his raids. Born at Subz, a city of Kesch, in the year A.D. 1336, Timour was the son of the chief of the Turkish tribe of Berlas which was subject to the khans of Tartary.

By a series of incidents, and while still under thirty years of age, he secured his elevation to the throne of Transoxania, where he made Samarkand his capital. Eleven years were spent in settling Transoxania and in conquering Kashgar and Khwarizm. Then came the conquest of Khorassan. He spared the life of the chief who cast himself on his mercy, but levied such a fine on Herat and other cities that the people were reduced to beggary. Kandahar and Cabul followed, but it took him four years to complete the subjugation of Khorassan, Seistan and Mazenderan.

All these provinces were turned into deserts by the ravages of his troops. 'Even submission did not exempt their unfortunate inhabitants from pillage

and massacre.'[1] In A.D. 1390, Timour invaded Persia with a large army, overthrowing the 'degenerate descendants' of Hulaku and destroying their capital.

Crossing the Araxes, he overran Georgia, received the submission of the khan of Lesghees, and the ruler of Shirwan, and subdued the chief of Laristan who had plundered a caravan of pilgrims going to Mecca. He then attacked the Turkomans of Asia Minor and took and pillaged the city of Van.

Isphahan submitted the moment he appeared before it, and he ordered the city to be spared but that a heavy fine should be exacted. This had been almost collected, when, owing to a misunderstanding, the inhabitants rose against the garrison and put three thousand of them to death. Timour took a terrible vengeance. The inhabitants were doomed to destruction, and when the city was taken each soldier was commanded to bring a certain number of heads. The total number slain is not known, but 70,000 heads were piled up in pyramids as a monument of savage revenge. Shiraz, Fars, Yedz and Kerman all submitted immediately to his authority.

One of Timour's armies went as far as the borders of China, another penetrated to Irtish in the district of Tomsk, western Siberia, while a third reached the Volga, spreading dismay and devastation wherever they went. In A.D. 1392 he again invaded Persia, spreading ruin everywhere. He captured

[1] Malcolm, *History of Persia*, Vol. I, p. 459.

the mountain fortress of Killah Suffeed which had been previously considered impregnable.

All the princes of the race of Muzaffer, even when they submitted at once, were put to death. Officers of Timour's army were appointed to the charge of the different provinces and cities.[1] On their commissions, instead of a seal, the impression of a red hand was stamped, symbol of the manner in which the territories taken were to be governed.

On the ruins of Baghdad he erected a pyramid of 90,000 heads. Having secured the submission of the city, he marched against the fortress of Tukreet, between Baghdad and Mosul. Seventy-two thousand of his soldiers were engaged for several weeks in undermining the foundations of the fortress. When it was taken the whole of the garrison was put to death and their heads piled up in pyramids.

Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Kurdistan and Georgia next received Timour's attention, and entering Russia, he took and plundered Moscow. The year following he destroyed Astrakan and again pillaged Georgia and Circassia. Then returning to Samarkand he prepared for the invasion of India.

He overran Afghanistan and the greater part of Mooltan. Before beginning the siege of Delhi, he put to death in cold blood 100,000 Indian prisoners whom he had in his train, at the same time threatening terrible vengeance against any of his soldiers who

[1] Malcolm, *History of Persia*, Vol. 1, p. 465.

failed to carry out his orders. When the city was taken, immense numbers were slain. When he took the city of Meerut he flayed all the men alive and carried the women and children into captivity.

The sack of Delhi in A.D. 1398, and the massacre of its inhabitants by Timour, spread ruin far and wide.[1] It is said that for the next fifty years the country was so impoverished that the mints ceased to issue gold and silver coin; copper currency was sufficient for the needs of the miserable survivors.

A tribe of Turks, under Ottman, profiting by the break up of the Seljuk dynasty, had established themselves in Asia Minor and declared themselves independent. Bajazet I, who was the then Sultan—a conqueror second in renown only to Timour—was about to attack Constantinople. He was himself attacked and defeated by Timour, who is said to have put him in an iron cage, against which he (Bajazet) is later alleged to have knocked out his brains.[2]

Timour next took the city of Smyrna, the inhabitants of which were all put to the sword with the exception of a few who escaped by swimming to vessels in the harbour. Every city that offered any resistance was laid in ashes and the inhabitants massacred.

[1] *Cambridge Medieval History*, Vol. IV, p. 651.

[2] The story of the imprisonment of Bajazet in an iron cage is discredited by Hammer as quoted by Bury. Hammer says that the story arose out of a misconception of what two of the oldest historians write on the subject. He points out that they state that a 'litter furnished with bars like a cage was provided for Bajazet. Such litters were the kind of vehicle regularly used for conveying a prince's harem.' Bury's *Gibbon*, Vol. VII, p. 63.

The next expedition planned by Timour was the conquest of China. 'I am resolved' he said 'to perform a good and great action which will be an expiation of all my sins. I mean to exterminate the idolators of China. We will proceed to this holy war. We will slay the infidels, and mosques shall everywhere rise on the ruins of their vile temples.' [1]

This determination on the part of Timour was the outcome of an embassy sent to him, with an escort of 400 horsemen, by the Great Khan, to demand payment of the tribute claimed by China, which had fallen into arrears. Timour sent back word that he would pay no tribute, but rather he trusted to make the emperor himself his tributary and vassal, and that he would come in person.[2] He raised an army of 1,800,000, and setting out on his expedition crossed the Jaxartes when it was frozen, and marched for a whole month en route to China. Fortunately for that country, before he could accomplish his purpose, he was seized with serious illness and died at the town of Otrar, seventy-six leagues distant from Samarkand, on April 1st, A.D. 1405.

Timour aimed at the conquest of the world and the establishment of a world monarchy. His great ambition was to achieve fame as a conqueror, and noble cities were burnt to ashes and the inhabitants of provinces massacred, simply to make an impression.[3]

[1] Malcolm *History of Persia*, Vol. I.
[2] Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither*, Vol. I, p. 163.
[3] Bury's *Gibbon*, Vol. VII, p. 44.

He was a man of great stature with a very large head, open forehead, beautiful red and white complexion, and long hair, white from his birth.[1] In his ears he wore two diamonds of great value. He was of a serious and gloomy expression of countenance, an enemy to every kind of joke or jest, but especially to falsehood. He never relinquished his purpose or countermanded an order; never regretted the past or rejoiced in anticipation of the future. 'He considered the happiness of every human being as but a feather in the scale when weighed against the advancement of what he deemed his personal glory.' One of his great characteristics was his perseverance. In explanation of this he himself tells an anecdote of his early life. 'I once' he said 'was forced to take shelter from my enemies in a ruined building where I sat for many hours. Desiring to divert my mind from my hopeless condition I fixed my attention on an ant that was carrying a grain of corn, larger than itself, up a high wall. Sixty-nine times the grain fell to the ground, but the insect persevered and the seventieth time it reached the top of the wall. This sight' said Timour 'gave me courage at the moment and I have never forgotten the lesson it conveyed.'

Tamerlane was a fanatical Muhammadan who was bitterly opposed to everything Christian. He was of the Sunnite sect of Islam and persecuted even the Shiahs—another Islamic sect. Under his reign,

[1] Skrine and Ross, *The Heart of Asia*, p. 172.

Christianity was almost, if not entirely, destroyed from the greater part of Asia.[1]

Not only in the far east, but wherever he penetrated with his barbarous legions, he pitilessly harassed Christians who would not renounce their faith. When he invaded Georgia, he compelled the Christian prince, Isocrates, to declare himself a Muhammadan and the great majority of his subjects to do the same. The Christians who resisted were slaughtered, their churches destroyed and all sacred vessels and furniture given to the flames. In Anatolia the Christians were reduced to a position analogous to slavery.[2] At the taking of Azoph, or Tana, at the mouth of the Don, all the Christians who had not fled to their ships were condemned to death or slavery.

When he attacked the fortress and territory of Semseem in the Caucasus, as a service peculiarly acceptable to God, he is said to have demolished or destroyed not only the churches of the Christians but also the temples of the heathen.

As indicating his hatred towards Christians, it is recorded that 'when the enemies of the faith, the obnoxious Christians' had sought refuge in the caverns of the mountains, it was immediately determined to hunt them from their dens and to destroy them.[3]

At the taking of Sevauss in A.D. 1401, 'Christian and other infidels' were handed over to the rapacious

[1] Huc, *Christianity in China*, Vol. I, pp. 418, 420.
[2] Bury's *Gibbon*, Vol. VII, p. 58.
[3] Price, *History of Muhammadanism*, Vol. III, pp. 201, 205.

soldiery to be plundered and driven into captivity, and 4,000 of the garrison were buried alive.[1] In another place, it is mentioned, that, when proceeding to Tiflis in A.D. 1403, he did not omit to perpetuate the recollection of his 'immitigable hatred' of Christianity by the destruction of every monastery and every church in the districts on the line of march.

Seven hundred towns, hamlets and monasteries, and every church built of stone and probably those built of other materials as well, were levelled to the ground in another province. The wretched inhabitants were hunted to their retreats, dislodged and finally slaughtered.[2]

Sven Hedin, in his book *Travels in Central Asia*, gives a graphic account of the countless buried and ruined towns to be found in the region of the Gobi desert in central Asia. The desert is called Dekken-dekka, because a thousand and one towns and vast stores of silver and gold are said to be buried under its sandy wastes.

At the foot and on the slopes of mount Tumshuk are the ruins of an old city, although the region is now sterile and uninhabited. To the west of Tumshuk is another collection known as Eski Shahr. A man setting out from Aksak-Maral stumbled on a deserted town. He filled a sack with gold and silver coins which he had found, but was attacked by wild cats. He threw down the bag and fled. On

[1] Price, *History of Muhammadanism*, Vol. III, pp. 318, 446.
[2] Idem, Vol. II, p. 444.

returning later to take it away he could not find the town. It had been swallowed up in sand.[1]

Sven Hedin states that a man in Khotan told him of a city which he once saw in the desert, with the dead bodies of people in positions which seemed to show that they had suddenly been overtaken by death.[2]

Near the oasis of Guma are the ruins of another town, and in the neighbourhood are large quantities of broken clay vessels, coins, rings, articles in bronze and many fragments of glass, indicating a very ancient and highly developed civilization. The natives say they come from an old city called Hasar.[3]

Sven Hedin speaks of other cities also and gives a detailed account of a visit he paid to the ruins of the large city of Takla-Makan.[4] He found that the houses had all been built of poplar wood; not a trace of a stone or clay house was to be seen. They were square or oblong and divided into several rooms. There were hundreds of such houses. The ground plan of the city could not be made out, but it had a diameter of from two to two and a half miles. The houses were all buried under sand dunes, except where they were on rising ground or in sheltered positions.

By means of excavations it was found that some of the buildings were decorated with paintings executed in a masterly fashion. One house had

[1] Sven Hedin, *Travels in Central Asia*, Vol. I, pp. 452, 455.
[2] Idem, p. 782. [3] Idem, p. 739. [4] Idem, p. 793

evidently been two-storied. There were also traces of gardens with what appeared to have been avenues of fruit trees.[1] The river Keriya-daria had evidently at one time been a powerful stream and had run close to the walls of the city, and there had been an extensive system of irrigation. Woods had lined the banks of the stream, millstones had revolved, silk had been cultivated and industries had flourished. Some distance further on, another city, Karadung, on a smaller scale but otherwise similar, was found.[2]

An Indian newspaper (*The Hindu* of 7-2-25) quoting from the London *Daily Chronicle*, refers to discoveries just made in Mongolia by the Russian professor Koslov, 'of the lost capital of a lost empire, and of a library of 2,500 volumes in seven languages including the vocabulary of an unknown tongue.' Professor Koslov, after an absence of twenty months, brought with him to Leningrad fifty large cases filled with objects found in the Gobi desert. When these have been examined and the books translated, what floods of light may they not shed on the period with which we have been dealing!

May it not have been that, when the inhabitants of this and other cities were exterminated, either by Jenghiz or Tamerlane, or fell victims to pestilence, there was nothing to check the persistent encroachment of the sand or prevent the filling up of the

[1] Sven Hedin, *Travels in Central Asia*, Vol. I, p. 798.
[2] Idem, p. 816.

irrigation channels, and soon towns and villages were overwhelmed and lost sight of?[1]

Tamerlane passed over like a devastating scourge, cold, cruel, imperturbable; he was accessible to no sentiment of pity or commiseration, and after having laid waste thousands of towns and destroyed countless numbers of men he left a great part of Asia a desert, covered with human bones and blood-stained ruins.'[2]

'His mere nod was sufficient to cause vast multitudes to abandon Christianity.'

One important result of Timour's conquests was the victory of Islam in central Asia. From the beginning Timour acted in close co-operation with the Muslim ecclesiastics of Transoxania, and when he attained supreme power he did away with the Mongolian and Turkish legislative system of Jenghiz and substituted the law of Islam.[3] There is a great difference between the two systems. Jenghiz and his successors were subject to the law and bound by its provisions, but according to the principles of

[1] Sven Hedin's description of the condition of those Central Asian countries as the result of the Muhammadan deluge is paralleled by what we read about North Africa. The Arabs, it has been said, carried the desert with them into the fair Mediterranean lands. An old Arabian writer declared that prior to the invasion of North Africa by the Muhammadans 'it was possible, so extended were the forests, to travel many days beneath the shade of trees. The land was, as Herodotus had described it eight centuries earlier, fertile, well wooded well watered. The Romans planted vineyards and orchards, led out the water, and drove roads through the country. The Muslims cut down trees, burned the forests, neglected the roads. They ruined the country. (E. D. Smith. *The Golden Stool*, p. 237.)

[2] Huc, *Christianity in China*, Vol. I, p. 421.

[3] Bury's *Gibbon*, Vol. VII, p. 72 note.

Islam, the head of the state is not bound by the law but is responsible only to God. He thus broke entirely with Mongol tradition and drew the Turks of central Asia out of touch with the East.

Absorption by Roman Catholicism. Muslim persecution, and the ravages of the Mongols and of Tamerlane, affected mainly western, central and northern Asia, including Siberia and Mongolia, in all of which scarcely a vestige of Christianity was left.

The same result was attained in China by the anti-Christian Ming dynasty, which succeeded the Tartar in A.D. 1369.[1] The Christians there then, whether Roman Catholic or Nestorian, either had to flee the country, abjure Christianity, or hide their identity in one or other of the numerous secret societies already in existence or which sprang up at that time.

As regards Japan, Burmah, South India and Ceylon, in all of which probably and certainly in the two latter, there were large Christian communities, the Christians appear to have accepted Roman Catholic practice and polity and were henceforth reckoned as Roman Catholic Christians.

The process of absorption, no doubt, took some time, but Wiltsch informs us that as early as the end of the thirteenth century the Franciscans, under John de Monte Corvino, secured the adhesion of even the metropolitan of China, and, therefore, separate

[1] Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, III, ii. p. 535.

accounts of Nestorian activities were after that time no longer available,[1] although we do find elsewhere a reference to the appointment by the Nestorian patriarch, Simeon V, of a metropolitan to South China as late as A.D. 1490.[2]

There is no confirmation of the defection of the metropolitan, but there seems no reason to doubt the truth of the claim implied as regards Nestorianism generally in the remaining countries of the East, always excepting a section of the Syrian Christians of south-west India and the Nestorian remnant in Kurdistan.

Wiltsch mentions Ochia in the island of Nippon, Japan, as the seat of a Roman Catholic bishop in the fourteenth century, and it was not until about the seventeenth century that the Japanese took up an attitude of antagonism to Christianity, due to the interference of the Catholic missionaries in politics.

It is in south India, however, rather than in Japan, that we find the clearest evidence of the existence of large Christian communities, now Roman Catholic, which can only be accounted for on the assumption that they are the descendants of those won to Christ by the early Nestorian missionaries.

Reference has been made elsewhere to the Christian kingdoms in central India of which Marco Polo writes. These, however, with the Christianity of

[1] Wiltsch, *Geography and Statistics of the Church*, p. 358.
[2] H. Holme. *The Oldest Christian Church*, p. 34.

north India, must have been swept away in the cataclysm resulting from the depredations of Muhammad Tuglaq, Tamerlane and other Muhammadan rulers. The Christianity that is found in north and north-west India to-day is largely the result of the missionary awakening of the nineteenth century and more particularly of the mass movements of the last two or three decades. For example, in the United Provinces and in the Punjab, with a total Christian population of over half a million, Protestants are to Roman Catholics in the proportion of ten to one. The reverse is the case in the south, more especially in the Tamil and Malayalam areas. This part of India was to a large extent outside the area of Muhammadan domination. With a Christian population of approximately three millions, more than two millions are Roman Catholic, including Syrians and those under the jurisdiction of Goa. In the Tamil area the only district where the Protestants are even approximately equal to the Roman Catholics is that of Tinnevelly in the extreme south of the peninsula, which in round numbers returns 103,000 Roman Catholics as against 89,000 Protestants. Eight districts in the central Tamil area return a combined total of 405,000 Roman Catholic Indian Christians as against 63,000 Protestants, a proportion of more than six to one. The disparity varies in different districts. Trichinopoly has 86,000 Catholics and 4,000 Protestants. Tanjore, 80,000 Catholics to 8,000 Protestants. Ramnad, 64,000 Catholics and 24,500 Protestants. Madura,

54,000 and 10,000, south Arcot, 59,000 and 5,000 and Salem, 14,000 and 1,000 respectively.[1]

Ceylon, where Cosmas found Christians in A.D. 522 and which was the seat of a bishop in the fourteenth century, has an equally large percentage of Roman Catholics. In a total population of four and a half millions, 443,000 are Christians, of whom 386,000 are Roman Catholics and 57,000 are Protestants.

A considerable proportion of the various figures given are no doubt to be accounted for by natural increase and other causes, but when every allowance has been made there must still remain large numbers unaccounted for. Where do they all come from, if the Roman Catholics have not fallen heir to the fruits of Nestorian missionary effort in the early centuries of the present era? There are several considerations which support this view.

The number of Roman Catholic foreign missionaries in India and Ceylon is less than half the number of Protestants, and the disproportion in the number of Indian helpers is even greater. Then, with the exception of the work of St. Francis Xavier in the sixteenth century, there is no record of any great Roman Catholic ingathering in any part of India, and as regards Xavier, the sphere of his labours, lasting not more than six or seven years at the most, was limited almost exclusively to the Malabar and Pearl Fishery coast, the latter including Tuticorin and

[1] *Census of India*, Vol. XIII, Chapter xv.

neighbourhood. Even there, those who submitted to the baptismal rite were led thereto by considerations other than spiritual as evidenced by the fact that ten years prior to Xavier's arrival 20,000 Paravas became Christians so as to secure the protection of the Portuguese against Muhammadan oppression.[1] Numbers of those who received baptism at the hands of Xavier were probably influenced by similar considerations. The superficial nature of much that was done is evident from such statements as the following in Faber's *Life of Xavier*. Speaking of his labours in Travancore he writes: 'When Xavier entered the kingdom of Travancore he found it entirely idolatrous but when he left it after a few months residence he left it entirely Christian.'[2]

The Travancore of Xavier's time with its northern boundary in the neighbourhood of Quilon was of course much smaller than the territory now so designated, but, even so, to write of the whole people as having been made Christian in the space of a few months by one who was ignorant of the language, in itself sufficiently indicates the superficial nature of the work.

Xavier himself writes: 'The natives (of India) are so terribly wicked that they can never be expected to embrace Christianity. It is so repellent to them in every way that they have not even patience to listen when we address them on the subject; in fact we might just as well invite them to allow

[1] Faber's *Life of Xavier*, p. 51.
[2] Idem, p. 73.

themselves to be put to death as to become Christians.'[1] Writing to the king of Portugal on the same subject Xavier says:

'I have discovered a unique, but as I assuredly believe, a sure means of improving this evil state of things—a means by which the number of Christians in this land may, without doubt, be greatly increased. It consists in your majesty declaring clearly and decidedly that you entrust your principal concern, to wit, the propagation of our most holy faith, to the viceroy and to all the deputy governors in India, rather than to all the clergy and priests. . . . . To avoid all misunderstanding, your majesty would do well to indicate by name all those of us who are working in India, and to explain in this connection that your majesty does not lay the responsibility on one, or on few, or on all of us . . . . but that the dissemination of Christianity shall in every case depend entirely upon the viceroy or governor. . . . It is your majesty's highest duty and privilege to care for the salvation of the souls of your subjects and this duty can only be devolved upon such persons as are your majesty's actual representatives, and who enjoy the prestige and respect ever accorded to those in authority. . . . Let your majesty therefore demand reports from the viceroy or the governors concerning the numbers and quality of those heathen who have been converted, and concerning the prospects of, and means adopted

[1] Howells, *The Soul of India*, p. 556.

for, increasing the number of converts. . . . At the appointment of every high official to the government of any town or province, your majesty's royal word should be most solemnly pledged to the effect that if in that particular town or province the number of native Christians were not considerably increased, its ruler would meet with the severest punishment; for it is evident that there would be a far greater number of converts, if only the officials earnestly desired it. Yea, I demand that your majesty shall swear a solemn oath affirming that every governor who shall neglect to disseminate the knowledge of our most holy faith shall be punished on his return to Portugal by a long term of imprisonment and by confiscation of his goods, which shall then be disposed of for charitable ends . . . . I will content myself with assuring you that, if every viceroy or governor were convinced of the full seriousness of such an oath, the whole of Ceylon, many kings on the Malabar coast, and the whole of Cape Comorin would embrace Christianity within a year. As long, however, as the viceroys and governors are not forced by fear of disfavour to gain adherents to Christianity, your majesty need not expect that any considerable success will attend the preaching of the Gospel in India, or that many baptisms will take place.' The king adopted the plan outlined with such frankness by Xavier.

Only on the assumption that the people baptized in such large numbers were already nominal Christians, or the children of such, can we explain their

willingness to submit to the baptismal rite, 'In one single day' we read, he 'baptized the inhabitants of a whole parish' although, as he himself admits, all that he knew of the language of the people was a few phrases and sentences that he had learned by heart.[1]

Confirmation of this assumption is found in the history of the Tranquebar mission. Fenger, the Danish historian of the mission, referring to the existence of a large Roman Catholic community near Tranquebar says that prior to the time of Ziegenbalg it had been joined by many hundreds of people, but how or when it came into being no one knew nor is there any 'detailed account of its rise and progress.'[2]

Still further confirmation is found in the designations of several of the Roman Catholic bishoprics in the Roman Catholic ecclesiastical provinces in India to-day. Included in the ecclesiastical province of Simla is found the bishopric of Kashmir and Kafiristan.[3] We learn from Wiltsch that there were Nestorian bishops at Nahz and Dir as long ago as A.D. 1028, but it is doubtful if there are any Christians in Kafiristan to-day although the name is retained as the designation of the comparatively recently established bishopric. Patna is the name of another present-day see. There was a Nestorian metropolitan in Ulna or Patena in A.D. 1222, and Ceylon is

[1] Faber, *Life of Xavier*, p. 54.
[2] Fenger, *History of Tranquebar Mission*, pp. 21, 22.
[3] *Catholic Directory of India, Burma and Ceylon*, pp. 1–3.

credited with being the seat of a bishop in the fourteenth century.[1]

Educationally the Roman Catholics are equal to, and at least in one respect even surpass, the Protestants. In the census report for 1911, in Bombay and Madras Presidencies with the associated states, 'Syrian Christians come first, educationally, with a percentage of 31·1 for males, 8·6 for females. Protestants have 21·2 for males and 12 for females; while Roman Catholics have 23·3 for males and 7·3 for females.'[2] This harmonizes with what we know of the emphasis laid by the early Nestorians on education.

We may sum up by referring to the testimony of Sir W. W. Hunter. He says: 'The downfall of the Nestorian church in India' (or rather South India) 'was due neither to reversions to paganism nor to any persecution by native princes but to the pressure of the Portuguese inquisition and the proselytizing energy of Rome.'[3]

From what has been said we are justified in assuming that the Christian communities formed in India as the result of Nestorian missionary activity prior to the thirteenth century did not cease to exist, but were, with the exception of the Syrians, simply merged in Roman Catholicism and continued as before under their new designation.

[1] Wiltsch, *Geography and Statistics of the Church*, pp. 163–168, 358.

[2] *Indian Village Education Report*, (note) p. 16.

[3] W. W. Hunter, *The Indian Empire*, p. 240.

Long ere that, however, Nestorian missionary fervour had died out, and the church as a living spiritual force had practically ceased to function. The Christians, so called, had become Christians only in name.

Note. The decline in spiritual earnestness probably coincided with the recognition of the Christians as a superior closed caste. This evidently took place in Malabar about the end of the eighth century or the beginning of the ninth. We have no definite information on the subject as regards the rest of South India, but it is significant that caste distinctions are even now recognized by the Roman Catholic church and that a large proportion of the membership of that community still claim to be caste Christians. It is quite possible, therefore, that this pernicious practice may have been inherited from a decadent Nestorianism rather than introduced, or permitted, *de novo*, by Roman Catholicism.

CHAPTER XI

BY-PRODUCTS OF NESTORIANISM

The extermination of Christianity from central and northern Asia as the result of Muhammadan persecution, Mongol devastation and Tamerlane's hatred, was so complete, that, apart from the tomb stones of Semiryechensk and the ruins of countless cities, scarcely a trace remains.

It is different, however, with China, Japan, Burmah, etc. In these countries there are echoes of Christian teaching and relics of Christian customs which carry us back unmistakably to those early Nestorian missionaries who alone furnish us with the key to much that would be not only puzzling but otherwise inexplicable.

Christianity in China has had varied experiences. Saeki claims that the China of the T'ang era A.D. 618–845, if not actually Christian in name, was at least under strong Christian influence, and that the leaven of Nestorianism had penetrated the whole of Chinese literature.

The adverse edict of A.D. 845, ordering the suppression not only of Nestorianism, but also of Buddhism and Muhammadanism, checked the progress that Christianity was making and resulted in its almost total eclipse. It was not until the thirteenth century that it recovered anything like its previous proportions, only to be followed in the fourteenth

century by entire suppression by the Ming dynasty, which came into power in A.D. 1369.

Saeki thinks that as the result of the edict of suppression in A.D. 845, many of the Chinese Nestorians may have become Muhammadans, and that the amalgamation was completed in the fourteenth century during the time of Tamerlane.[1] He estimates the number of Muhammadans in China at 20,000,000, although Broomhall thinks they do not exceed 10,000,000.

He is of opinion that the presence of such a large number of Muhammadans cannot be accounted for unless the fact of this suggested amalgamation in the fourteenth century is admitted. In confirmation of this he adduces the fact that both were much alike in race and language and were fellow sufferers for their respective faiths, and that both were opposed to the perverted doctrine of the Trinity, i.e., Father, Mother (Mary) and Son, and lastly that Nestorians and Muhammadans alike were haters of idolatry.

He claims that in A.D. 742 there were only 5,000 Muhammadans in China, while at the beginning of the twentieth century there were twenty millions or more, which is altogether too many to be accounted for by natural and gradual increase during ten centuries. Saeki's arguments on this point are not very convincing. For example, he contends that not only did they suffer in common, from the persecution under the emperor Wutsung in A.D. 845, but that

[1] Saeki, *Nestorian Monument in China*, p. 49.

there was a similar persecution under Timour. This is quite evidently a mistake. Timour never invaded China, although he purposed doing so, nor was he ever antagonistic to Muhammadans as a whole seeing he was a Muhammadan himself.

The second explanation given by Saeki for the disappearance of Nestorianism from China is much more probable. He thinks that the descendants of those who did not join the Muhammadans are probably to be found to-day in the membership of the secret society known as Chin-tan-chiao, which numbers eleven million adherents, and in other secret societies, of which there are altogether ten.[1]

Saeki claims, on the basis of both internal and external evidence, that the Chin-tan-chiao, or 'pill of immortality' society, is decidedly Christian in character. It is to be found in Szecheran, Shensi, Honan, Shantung, in the borders of Mongolia and in Manchuria. In the years immediately prior to the proclamation of a republic most of the disaffected in Mongolia joined this society as their only hope from the oppression of the mandarins. Every powerful combination against the latter being regarded as rebellion, the Government in A.D. 1891 massacred 15,000 of these Chin-tan-chiao on the false charge of being rebels.

The founder of the Chin-tan-chiao, Lu Yen or Tung Pin, was born in A.D. 755 in P'uchow-fu in the south of Shensi.[2] He called himself the son of the

[1] Saeki, *Nestorian Monument in China*, p. 49.
[2] Idem, pp. 53–54.

'essence of the universe,' and professed not to have discovered this new truth himself but to have received it from the first and greatest of the eight immortals who lived about seven centuries before him. The real name of this greatest of the immortals is not given but he is called by such names as 'the warning bell which does not trust physical force;' 'the quiet logos;' 'the king of the sons of God;' 'the first teacher of the true doctrine of immortality;' and 'teacher from above.'

These remind one strongly of Christian truth. Nor does one know of any other teacher in the world who lived about that time and who taught such truths other than Jesus of Nazareth. How did Lu Yen get hold of these doctrines? According to the Hsi-an-fu monument, the Nestorian missionaries were received by the Chinese emperor in Hsi-an-fu in A.D. 635. The famous general Kwo Tsze Yih who, as already stated, lived A.D. 697–781, became a Christian. Lu Yen at the latter date would be twenty-six years of age. He lived in the region between Hsi-an-fu and Ping Yang-fu, so that he had ample opportunity of getting to know these western doctrines.

Temples to Shun-yang-Tsze, another name for Lu Yen, are to be found all over northern and central China and are much resorted to for healing by faith, and prayer for superhuman guidance.[1] The doctrine is also associated with the Buddhist mi-mi-kiao or

[1] Saeki, *Nestorian Monument in China*, p. 55.

kuan yin, the goddess of mercy, prayers used in the worship of whom have been found to be essentially the same as Christian prayers. Further, several of the leaders of the Chin-tan-chiao, irrespective of the fact of whether they became Christians later or not, assert that the essential doctrines of the Chintan-chiao and Christianity are the same.

The assumption then is, that the doctrines of this strongest Buddhist sect originated in Christianity.[1] One point to be noted is that they have no Christian scriptures, but this can easily be explained by the constant destruction of all presumably treasonable books, as the scriptures are supposed to be, that has been going on for a thousand years. In spite of having been hunted and hounded for ages the numbers of this sect still multiply, and new martyrs are ready in every age to risk property and home and life for the truth they profess.

Saeki claims that Lu Yen was no other than Lu-Hsin-yen, the Chinese scholar who wrote the Chinese ideographs on the Nestorian stone for Chin-Ching or Adam, the author of the inscription, and gives reasons for this contention.[2] He must have been twenty-six years of age at the time the monument was set up and was evidently a Chinese official holding an important position somewhere in that neighbourhood.

Other evidences in confirmation of this theory are to be found in the writings of Lu Yen himself.

[1] *Chinese Mission Handbook for 1896*, pp. 43–45 quoted by Saeki, pp. 55, 56.

[2] Saeki, *Nestorian Monument in China*, p. 56.

In the second volume of his complete works devoted to 'miracles of master Lu Yen' there is mention as to how he changed water into wine: how he healed the sick and wounded: how he cured a poor man suffering from paralysis: and how the blind received sight by his touch.[1] Are these mere coincidences with what one finds in the gospels? Even the liturgy of the Chin-tan-chiao resembles that of the Nestorians so that one may not be very far wrong if he assumes that the 15,000 Chinese Chin-tan-chiao martyrs of A.D. 1891 were really descendants of the old Chinese Nestorians.

Shan-tao (Zendo) who died A.D. 681—forty-six years after the reputed arrival of the Nestorian missionaries, taught salvation by faith in Amitabha.[2] How he got the idea of a vicarious Saviour or of 'eternal life' by faith in Amitabha is suggested by the fact that he lived at the time when the Nestorian mission flourished in China and that both Nestorians and Buddhists were then on friendly terms and met at the imperial court of the T'ang emperors.

The teaching of Shinran (the great successor of Shan-tao, A.D. 1173-1263) may be summed up in the words 'man cannot be saved by his own effort. It is by the grace and merit of Amitabha that man is saved.' Nama Amitabha (we trust in thee O Amitabha) is all we need to say to be saved and no more. (How very different this is from the southern Buddhism of Ceylon or Burmah!).

[1] Saeki, *Nestorian Monument in China*, p. 61.
[2] Idem, p. 148.

In Japan the teaching of the Amida sects and the Pure Land school, including as they do more than half the population of the country, is also traceable to Nestorian Christian tradition and goes even beyond that of Shinran. According to them Amida is without beginning and without end, all love, wisdom, benevolence and power. He appeared in various forms among men, all his incarnations being with a view to bringing salvation to mankind.[1] In his last incarnation he registered a vow that should the perfect consummation of Buddhahood be in his power he would not accept deliverance unless such deliverance should also mean the salvation of mankind.

To grasp the salvation wrought out by Amida nothing is needed but faith.[2] No works of the hand, no austerities or penances, no repentance, nothing but faith. Such doctrines can only have come either from Christianity or from some of the heretical Christian sects such as the Gnostics or Manicheans.

There is nothing to show that the Nestorian Christians were opposed to the Amitabha doctrine, and its development in China and Japan furnished a common meeting ground between them and the Buddhist monks. The Nestorian missionaries stood before the Roman governors and were the trusted advisors of the Chinese and possibly also of the Japanese sovereigns.[3] Saeki holds that they helped to

[1] Robinson, *History of Christian Missions*, p. 162.
[2] *Creed of Half Japan*, by A. Lloyd quoted by Robinson.
[3] Saeki, *Nestorian Monument in China*, p. 158.

create what is known as Chinese Buddhism and to confirm the belief in Amitabha—the Saviour who saves those who simply trust in and consecrate their whole being to Him.

The one fatal defect in the whole system is of course the absence of any reference to the cross of Christ, to the blood of atonement or to 'the resurrection of our Lord.' The preaching of the cross is still foolishness to the learned of this world, but to those who are being saved it is the power of God unto salvation.

Leaving the Far East we come next to India. Here too, apart from the great Syrian Christian community in Travancore and the multitudes in Ceylon and other parts of South India who were won over to the Roman Catholic faith either by persuasion or force, there are references in the writings of some of the reformed Hindu sects and in the traditions existing among different tribes that suggest a Christian origin or Christian influence.

Even earlier than the writings of Hindu reformers are to be found evidence of Christian influence in the *Bhagavad Gita* itself, which as shown elsewhere, could not have been written earlier than A.D. 600 and was probably written at a considerably later period. In it is the first mention of what the Hindus call bhakti. ('Bhakti means 'faith,' in the sense of absolute devotion to a personal God.) It is defined as an affection fixed upon the Lord. It is not belief. Those who hate the Lord may believe but they have not faith. It is abiding in Him. It

may not be devotion for some spiritual gain, for it must be purely unselfish.'

'Bhakti suddenly appeared for the first time in India as a religious doctrine some centuries after the foundation of Christianity,' and Grierson has no doubt but that it was borrowed from the early Christians of south India.[1] In the *Mahabharata* itself, there is an account of a voyage made by three Indian sages to the 'white continent' where alone perfect bhakti existed. Later, the followers of bhakti were divided into two sections, Krishnaites, referred to elsewhere, and Ramaites.

Bhakti was introduced into south India in the twelfth century by Ramanuja. He taught it, however, rather as a system of philosophy than as a religion, and it was studied chiefly by Brahmins.

Govindacharya in his life of Ramanuja quotes Nadadur Ammal as saying that the way of salvation is not by works (karma), not by knowledge (jnana or gnosis), not by devotion (bhakti), but by implicit trust placed in Ramanuja.[2] It is doubtful if Ramanuja himself would have endorsed this. It is said that on his death bed he warned his followers against worshipping him. A century or two later a follower of Ramanuja named Ramananda, from north India, visited the south and drew inspiration from the same source. A disciple of Ramananda, a Muhammadan named Kabir, founded a sect 'noted for their piety and morality' which now includes in its

[1] Grierson, *Hinduism and its Scriptures*, p. 14.
[2] Govindacharya, *Life of Ramanuja*, p. 249.

numbers thousands of the poorer classes of north India. Kabirism has much in it that is derived from Christianity.

Later than Kabir, in the sixteenth century, came Tulasi Dasa a great teacher of the Rama doctrine; and the only great religious teacher of India who refused to found a sect.[1] His followers are stated to number at the present day, nearly 100 millions. The root of what he too taught, was the Christian teaching learnt by Ramanuja and his followers from the Christians of the south. God, he says, 'became incarnate as Rama not merely to slay a demon, but to save souls.' Sin is incompatible with Rama's nature, yet no one is too great a sinner for Rama to save if only he will come to Rama. The sinner must confess his sin, and naked of all good works, throw himself before Rama, and 'Rama will stretch out his hand to save him as he has done to countless others before.' 'Bhakti, faith, devotion, directed to Rama, is all that is necessary for salvation, and salvation is a life of pure bliss with him after death.' 'Faith in his name is a little boat. The Holy Master Himself is the steersman. Stretching out His loving arms, He cries 'come, I will ferry thee across.' What is this but the teaching of Christianity with the name of Rama substituted for that of Christ? 'Who not only (as they say of Rama) became incarnate, and lived and taught upon the earth,' but 'Who was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification.'

[1] Grierson, *Hinduism and its Scriptures*, p. 18.

Mention will be made of only one more of these by-products of Nestorianism; *viz.*, the Karens of Burmah, seed that has been sown but the growth and development of which has been checked so that it failed to attain maturity. Here, however, there are no written documents to fall back upon and one has to be content with tradition handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth.

The Karens are a stalwart hill people, numbering nearly three millions, scattered throughout Burmah and northern Siam. They have proved to be marvellously receptive of the gospel message, carried to them by modern missionary effort, and large numbers of them have been definitely won for Christ, more particularly in Burmah proper. What was it that prepared the way and made them so responsive? It was the tradition current among them of a Father God in whom they believed, and Who showed favour to them: of a people once great because of righteousness: of a time when the Father God created the first human pair, set them in a garden, and talked with them as with friends and children.

The tradition, too, of the tragedy of the serpent, Mukawlee, the fall of Tha-nai, and E-en, and their consequent separation from their Father God: the assurance that, notwithstanding their turning from Him, their Father God still lives, and their belief in the existence of a golden book which their ancestors had possessed but which through carelessness had been lost, and the expectation that the book would one day be returned to them by messengers

from over the sea, prepared the way and made them ready to receive the message when it was brought to them once again. But where did the tradition come from in the first instance, and where did they get their knowledge of the creation story, of the fall of man, and of the interruption in the fellowship formerly existing between man and God, if not from those early Nestorian missionaries, who, as Cosmas in his *Christian Topography* tells us, had penetrated to Burmah and Siam even before the sixth century A.D., so that he was able to report Christian churches in those countries at that early date? These and other instances that might be mentioned attest afresh the widespread influence, even in its by-products, of that wonderful 'Church of the East' when at the zenith of its missionary activity.

CHAPTER XII

PRESENT CONDITION. CONCLUSION

In our survey we have noted how, with Edessa as the starting point and Persia as its centre, the 'Church of the East' popularly known by the name Nestorian, constrained as it was by persecution, and spiritually nurtured by its monastic system, extended its operations to one country after another.

Arabia, being nearest and most accessible, was one of the first countries to be evangelized from Persia. Then came the further provinces of that vast empire, which extended as far as Scind, where recently discoveries have been made connecting it with the civilization of the Euphrates valley and Babylon.

India, south as well as north, and Ceylon were also reached at a very early date. Then came Central Asia, Burmah, Siam, Turkestan, China and Japan. And then, perhaps last of all, southern Siberia and Mongolia with the modern provinces of Trans Baikal and the Amur, and China for the second time.

From west to east, from north to south, covering practically the whole of Asia, the messengers of the gospel, representatives of the most missionary church the world has ever seen, wended their way, and, supporting themselves by the labour of their hands, or provided for by those among whom

they laboured, carried the message of salvation to the utmost bounds of the continent. From the fourth to the beginning of the fourteenth century they maintained their testimony, as witnessed to by the cemetery inscriptions of Semiryechensk and other evidences.

The causes leading to their decadence and almost complete extermination have also been dealt with, and it only remains to refer briefly to the present condition of those who still survive.

The remnant who escaped the atrocities of Tamerlane found a refuge in the mountains of Kurdistan where they were lost sight of for several centuries. In the year A.D. 1551 they split into two sections and a patriarch was elected by each of the different factions. One of these, unable to secure nomination by his fellow metropolitans, and in order to strengthen himself against his rival, went to Rome and received ordination at the hands of the Roman pontiff. He, however, did not join the Roman communion, but continued Nestorian with his residence at Mosul. When more than a hundred years later, at Diarkebir and elsewhere, some of the Nestorians went over to Rome, they were called Uniate or Chaldean Christians while the others continued to be known as Nestorians.[1] Fortescue estimated the latter as numbering 100,000 prior to A.D. 1914. Yohanan,[2] however, gives 190,000 as the total, but it is not clear if the larger figure does

[1] Fortescue, *The Lesser Eastern Churches*, p. 159.
[2] Yohanan, *The Death of a Nation*, p. 8.

not include Uniates as well. The number to-day, according to Dr. Mingana, does not greatly exceed 40,000.[1]

They live partly in Persian and partly in Turkish territory, or what was Turkish before the war, but have long since ceased to be missionary in any sense whatever. It was only as the result of the travels of men like Rich and Layard that the fact that there was such a people was again brought to the knowledge of western Christendom.[2] Rich published the account of his travels in A.D. 1836, while Layard gave his discoveries to the world in A.D. 1849. Their references to the existence of remnants of this ancient church awakened great interest and resulted in the attention of various missionary societies being directed towards them.

Before the great war there were quite a number of missions of different nationalities, including Anglican, American, Russian, German and Danish, seeking to influence and help them in the direction of a fuller and deeper Christian life. Most of these must have had their work interfered with by the war, but they may have resumed operations since then.

Professor Yohanan, in his book, *The Death of a Nation*, gives a very tragic account of a massacre of Nestorians that took place in A.D. 1842 near the river Zab, when 10,000 persons were put to death by the Turks with great cruelty, while large numbers of women and children were carried into captivity.

[1] Mingana, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. IX. 2, p. 314.

[2] Fortescue, *The Lesser Eastern Churches*, p. 115.

He gives details also of the sufferings and horrors to which this persecuted church was subjected by the Turks and Kurds in more recent years, and closes his account with the words: 'The prospect of the forlorn remnant, who have escaped massacre, is piteous in the extreme, and it is said that some fifty thousand men and women and children from Persia and Kurdistan were, at the time of writing, naked, hungry and homeless.'[1] These, with perhaps a few more elsewhere, are apparently all that remain of the Central Asia section of this ancient church.

South India and Ceylon did not suffer at all from the depredations of Tamerlane, and the numerous Christian communities there continue to exist, but under different auspices, the majority of them ultimately being won to Roman Catholicism either by persecution or force.

It was only after the arrival of Xavier in A.D. 1542 and at his request, that the policy of compulsion was adopted, and knowing how this operated among the Syrians of the west coast one can understand that the same must have applied to such Christians in other parts of South India and Ceylon as had not up till that time voluntarily submitted to Roman Catholic rule.[2]

As already stated, only one section of the whole was able to maintain its identity and its distinctive characteristics. These are the Indian Christians of St. Thomas (Roman Catholic and non-Roman

[1] Yohanan, *The Death of a Nation*, p. 150.
[2] Howell, *The Soul of India*, p. 556.

Catholic), known as the Syrian Christians of South India. According to the Government Census of 1921, the Syrian Christians in the states of Travancore and Cochin numbered 767,260. To these have to be added 24,027 from the British territory of Malabar and South Canara giving a total of 791,287. A little over 400,000 of these are Roman Catholics, almost 250,000 are Jacobites, more than 10,000 are Syro-Chaldeans or Nestorians, and 114,000 are Reformed, or Mar Thoma Christians, who are strongly evangelical. Other 15,000 are connected with the C.M.S. but are probably not returned as Syrians.

When the Dutch succeeded the Portuguese as the dominant power on the Malabar Coast a large number of those who had under compulsion accepted Roman Catholic doctrine and polity reverted to their previous faith. They had for long resented the methods of the Jesuit fathers, but the immediate occasion of their final rebellion was the capture by the Portuguese of a metropolitan who was on his way to them from the patriarch of Babylon. He was taken to Goa and there dealt with by the Inquisition. This took place in A.D. 1653 and led to the secession at Coonen Cross. No other bishop from the west succeeded in running the gauntlet of the Portuguese fleet until A.D. 1665, when a Jacobite bishop named Gregorious, styled metropolitan of Jerusalem, arrived, and as the seceders had been unable to secure a Nestorian bishop they were glad to avail themselves of his services, to the extent, at least, of allowing him

to ordain the acting metropolitan, henceforth known as Mar Thomas I.[1] The latter had already been ordained twelve years previously by the laying on of hands of twelve of the kattanars, but that was probably not considered quite valid. The arrival of Gregorius furnished the opportunity of getting the ordination regularized. Having helped them in this way Gregorius continued with them, assisting the Indian metropolitan. Later other Jacobites came from the west and introduced the Jacobite liturgy, and in this way the 'Coonen Cross' seceders became Jacobite. It was largely a case of 'needs must' so far as they were concerned (c.f. chapter V., p. 128).

There is no evidence that they ever really accepted Monophysite doctrines, and the probability is that although they had repudiated Roman Catholic domination many of them continued to observe Roman Catholic customs and practices. Further, although, according to Paoli, the Nestorians in A.D. 1796 were to the Jacobites in the proportion of two to one, the line of demarcation was probably not very clearly defined and there may have been a good deal of coming and going between the two communities.

In A.D. 1798 the northern part of Malabar suffered much from the depredations and frightfulness of Tippu Sultan, the Muhammadan ruler of Mysore. He penetrated Travancore as far as Alwaye, destroyed twenty-seven of the most ancient churches and wreaked his fury on Christian and

[1] Milne Rae: *The Syrian Church in India*, pp. 259, 269.

Hindu alike.[1] One-tenth of the Christian population is said to have perished by sword and pestilence. Only the intervention of the British, and the appointment of a British Resident to the courts of Travancore and Cochin, saved them from annihilation.

The first Resident was Colonel Macaulay, who was succeeded ten years later by Col. Munro. Both were earnest Christian men and much interested in the spiritual well-being of the Syrian Christian community.

It was not only Tippu Sultan, however, that the Christians of Malabar had to fear. They were in no less danger from their own Hindu rulers. In south Malabar the Raja of Travancore had conquered, and added to his territory, the previously independent kingdoms of Porcad, Wadakancore and Thekencore, extending his boundaries to the borders of Cochin much to the disadvantage of the Christians in the annexed area. In A.D. 1780 during the dewanship of Nagam Pillai they were cruelly persecuted and many new converts were compelled to return to their former heathen practices.[2] To escape the cruelties to which they were subjected 20,000 Christians left their homes and took refuge in the hills. So disheartened did they become as the result of the hardships that they had undergone, that when Claudius Buchanan visited them in A.D. 1806 'he perceived all around symptoms of poverty and

[1] W. S. Hunt, *The Anglican Church in Travancore*, p. 39.
[2] C. M. Agur, *Church History in Travancore*, pp. 55, 56.

political depression.' 'We are in a degenerate state compared with our forefathers,' said one of the kattanars to him. Their time of trial, however, was not yet over. In A.D. 1809 they suffered a still more grievous persecution at the hands of dewan Velu Tampi when nine kattanars or priests and upwards of 3,000 men, women and children were butchered and their bodies thrown into the back-waters. The Christians of Cochin fared no better at the hands of Paliathu Atchen, the dewan of that state. Numbers of them were first subjected to cruel tortures and then had their hands and feet tied together and were thrown into the sea. The efforts of the Resident, Colonel Macaulay, secured from the Travancore Government a sum of six thousand pagodas as compensation for the injury done to the Christians and their churches by their Hindu rulers. Three thousand of this was given to the Roman Catholics. The other three thousand was invested in perpetuity for the benefit of the non-Catholic section of the Christian community.[1] Later, as the result of a representation made by Colonel Munro, the Church Missionary Society sent out missionaries to Travancore for the express purpose of helping forward the spiritual life of this ancient Christian Church. This was in A.D. 1816. The missionaries were charged not to aim at the formation of a separate community but to help the Syrians in every possible way. They

[1] Hunt, *The Anglican Church in Travancore*, pp. 10, 11.

were welcomed by the metropolitan of the Jacobite party and the two bodies worked together in perfect harmony for the first ten years. In A.D. 1825, however, the metropolitan Mar Dionysius III died and was succeeded by Mar Dionysius IV, a man of a very different stamp. Naturally there were among the Jacobites some who resented the reforms that the C.M.S. missionaries were seeking to bring about. The new metropolitan allied himself with the reactionary party, but as both he and his predecessor seem to have been indebted to Mar Philoxenus, the venerable metropolitan of the small independent see of Tholyur or Anyur [1] to the north of Cochin for their ordination, the latter exercised a restraining influence on him and there was no open break. [2] In A.D. 1830, however, Mar Philoxenus died and from that time forward the attitude of Mar Dionysius IV to the C.M.S. missionaries became more and more hostile. But it was not until A.D. 1837, that the breach actually took place. In that year Mar Dionysius definitely declared

[1] During the latter part of the regime of the Nestorian metropolitan Mar Gabriel, the metropolitan of the Jacobite section was Mar Thomas IV. He died in A.D. 1728 having selected as his successor his nephew Mar Thomas V. The latter, however, not having been regularly ordained made overtures to Rome for that purpose but without success. He then approached the Dutch authorities, and as a result there landed at Cochin on April 23, A.D. 1751 three bishops, Basil, Gregory and John. A quarrel arose between them and Mar Thomas V, however, over the question of passage money, and not only did the ordination of the latter never take place but a party hostile to him grew up. Mar Gregory consecrated the leader of this party who took the name Mar Cyril. Mar Thomas promptly threw Cyril into prison, but he escaped and fled to the extreme north of Cochin where he founded the diminutive see of Anyur or Tholyur in the British district of Malabar. Each bishop of the see consecrates his successor. The succession till now has been Cyril I and II, Philoxenus I and II and Cyril III and IV.

[2] *State Manual of Travancore*, Vol. I, p. 208.

himself as in communion with the patriarch of Antioch and withdrew all the Jacobite students from the seminary at Kottayam, where they were being taught, in part, by the missionaries. It was evident that there was no hope of a compromise. Accordingly arbitrators were appointed and the property that had been acquired jointly in the preceding twenty years was divided between the two parties, the 3,000 star pagodas forming part of the award to Mar Dionysius. The missionaries, however, had exerted a wholesome influence during the time they had been at work and a considerable number of the people were by this time convinced as to the need for reform. Some of these determined to throw in their lot with the C.M.S., and although the missionaries all through have discouraged the Syrians separating themselves from their native church, the descendants of those who threw in their lot with the mission now number approximately 15,000. The other section of the reformers, while adhering to the church of their fathers, aimed at bringing about reform from within. The leader of this latter party was Abraham Malpan, a professor of Syriac in the seminary. His native village was Maramann on the Pampa river which thus became the centre of the reform movement.

In A.D. 1841, with a view to strengthening the reform party, Abraham Malpan sent his nephew Matthew to either Mardin or Mosul in order that he might be ordained metropolitan. Matthew had been a student in the seminary at Kottayam and had been

selected for further training in the C.M.S. theological school, Madras. He was, however, dismissed from the Madras school for some misconduct. It was after this that he was sent for ordination. It is stated that he remained for some time with the patriarch Elias, was then consecrated by him and appointed metropolitan of Malabar although there was already a metropolitan exercising the office there. The statement that he was consecrated by Mar Elias seems to indicate that it was to Mosul he went for his ordination and not Mardin. The titular name by which the patriarch of Mosul is known is Elias while that of Mardin is Ignatius. If this were so it would have an important bearing on subsequent events. Be that as it may, in A.D. 1843 Matthew, who had taken the title of Mar Athanasius, returned to Malabar to undertake the duties of his office. It had been the intention of Abraham when he sent him that he should return to Maramanna and become the leader of the reform party there, but on Matthew's arrival at Cochin he was met by representatives of the conservative party, and later by a considerable number of the people, who urged him to place himself at their head and thus become the metropolitan of the whole Jacobite party, supplanting Mar Dionysius. After some hesitation, and, perhaps, in the hope that he might be able to lead the entire body along the path of reform, he agreed, and proceeding to Trivandrum succeeded in obtaining the recognition of his claim by the Travancore Durbar. Naturally Mar Dionysius resented this and sought the assist-

ance of the patriarch, representing to him that he (the patriarch) had been deceived by Mar Athanasius who was one of the party favouring the Protestant missionaries, while he himself was submissive to the patriarch.[1] The patriarch sent his secretary Mar Cyril to Travancore with full powers and documents signed by him (the patriarch) to be used in case of need. Mar Cyril reported in favour of Mar Dionysius, but before any action could be taken the patriarch died and Mar Cyril and Mar Dionysius used the signed documents to make it appear that Mar Dionysius had retired in favour of Mar Cyril. The Travancore Durbar, however, stepped in, and, after examination, decreed that the credentials of Mar Athanasius were genuine but that those of Mar Cyril were forged. They, therefore, confirmed Mar Athanasius in his metropolitancy. Mar Dionysius IV died in A.D. 1855, and from that date until A.D. 1866 Mar Matthew Athanasius remained in undisputed possession of the see, and amongst other things drew the interest on the endowment of 3,000 pagodas.

In A.D. 1865, Joseph, a priest of Kannankulam in Cochin, was sent, by Mar Cyril's party to the patriarch of Antioch at Deir Zaaferan, his residence, four miles north of Mardin, to be consecrated as metropolitan. This was done and he returned to Malabar, A.D. 1866, as Mar Dionysius V and immediately claimed the office of metropolitan. The Durbar told him either

[1] *State Manual of Travancore*, Vol. I, p. 217.

to compromise with Athanasius or to file a suit, but not until after Mar Matthew's death did he do so. In A.D. 1868 Mar Matthew Athanasius ordained his cousin Thomas, son of Abraham Malpan, as his successor. On Mar Matthew's death in A.D. 1877 Mar Thomas succeeded him. In A.D. 1879 Mar Dionysius V filed his suit to recover, from Mar Thomas Athanasius, Kottayam seminary and other property. The final judgement was not pronounced until A.D. 1889, when two Hindu judges in the Court of Appeal, Travancore, decided in favour of Mar Dionysius, the European Christian judge giving his judgement in favour of Mar Thomas who had succeeded Mar Matthew as leader of the reformed party. [1] This decision was followed by a number of other suits claiming the right to the possession of church buildings and other property. Those tried in Travancore were similarly decided, but those filed in British India and in Cochin state were decided in favour of the Mar Thoma party. And thus after nearly fifty years the reform party were deprived of nearly all their Travancore possessions, and those who approved of the reforms had definitely to take sides either for or against. These different decisions, however, proved to be a blessing in disguise to the Mar Thoma party, their material loss resulting in spiritual gain. Mar Thomas died in A.D. 1892 and was succeeded after an interval of a year by his brother Mar Titus I who was ordained by Mar Cyril of

[1] Mar Matthew and Mar Thomas both claimed that the church was autonomous, but Mar Dionysius, with a view to securing the support of the patriarch, held that it was subordinate to Antioch.

Anyur, a different person to Mar Cyril, the secretary to the patriarch, to whom reference has already been made.

In A.D. 1898 Mar Titus I ordained as his suffragan Mar Titus II, nephew of Mar Matthew, who succeeded to the metropolitancy in A.D. 1909 on the death of the former. The number of those who declared themselves definitely on the side of reform under Mar Thomas could not have been very large, and when Mar Titus I was ordained in A.D. 1893 they probably did not exceed 20,000 in number, but from that time onward they made rapid progress. They discarded many of the ritualistic practices which had grown up among the Jacobites or had been assimilated from Roman Catholicism during the period when they were subject to its domination, but they went even further than that. An evangelistic association was formed which sent out evangelists to preach the gospel in different parts of Travancore and Cochin and in a short time they were able to report 1577 converts from heathenism. [1]

As regards the party of Mar Dionysius, although they were successful in their suit against the reformed, or Mar Thoma section, it did not benefit them. The patriarch of Antioch immediately came forward with a request for a share of the spoils. This led to a division in the Jacobite party itself, those who favoured the patriarch forming one section, and those, headed by the metropolitan, who claimed that his jurisdiction had to do with matters spiritual only and not with

[1] Richards, *The Indian Christians of St. Thomas*, p. 57.

matters temporal forming the other. To decide the question as to the correct interpretation, the members of the now divided party took the matter to court, and the litigation which has already lasted several years, still drags on. Some of them, 'although they are still called Jacobites now say that they anathematise the heresy of Eutyches and hold the whole Catholic faith. They say that the only difference between them and the Roman Catholics is that they do not admit the jurisdiction of the bishop of Rome and that they do admit the jurisdiction of the patriarch of Antioch.'[1] Others are more akin to the Mar Thoma Christians, with whom they co-operate in various ways.

The Syrian Church as a whole, and the reformed party in particular, has benefited much by the presence of C. M. S. missionaries among them. One of the objects which the missionaries always kept prominently in view was the deepening and strengthening of the spiritual life of the Syrian Christian community, rather than the formation of an independent body outside the Syrian church.

Several factors helped in the accomplishment of this end. They have profited by the visits of several well known missioners from England. A very earnest Tamil evangelist, a booklet by whom was the means of bringing about the change in the life of Pilkington of Uganda which resulted in the great awakening there, conducted special missions in

[1] *State Manual of Travancore*, Vol. I, p. 219.

Travancore about the year A.D. 1895. Two very devoted English women, leaving their home in England, took up their residence in Travancore for the express purpose of helping the Syrians in their spiritual life. And last of all, they had an annual visit from one of the most devoted and capable of the C.M.S. missionaries in Tinnevelly, the late Rev. T. Walker, who for sixteen years, until his death in 1912, conducted great Christian conventions which have played an important part in the development of the spiritual life of the Mar Thoma or reformed section of the Syrian Christian community.

As a result of these annual conventions, attended as they are by from 20,000 to 25,000 people, the strength of the Reformed party has risen year by year from approximately 20,000 in A.D. 1893 to 35,000 in 1901, 75,366 in 1911 and 114,061 in 1921.

In addition to the home mission work carried on by the Mar Thoma Christians they have begun foreign mission work in another language area and have now eight foreign missionaries in the field. These work in association with the National Missionary society of India, an indigenous society which is entirely financed and controlled by Indians. The present suffragan bishop or metropolitan, Mar Abraham, ordained in A.D. 1917, is a graduate of the Madras Christian college, and has taken his theological training in Wycliffe college, Toronto. He is eminently qualified to lead in the great spiritual awakening that has taken, and is taking place and which, if it continues on its original lines, promises

so much, not only for that ancient church, but for the whole of India.

This concludes the survey of the missionary activity of a church which realized in a very special manner the burden to which Paul refers when he says—'woe is me if I preach not the gospel' or that of which Jeremiah spoke when he said 'His word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones . . . and I could not stay.' (Jer. 20 : 9.) And when, weakened by persecution, lured from its positions of separateness by the bait of compromise, and exterminated in so many places by ruthless savagery it ceased to be an aggressive spiritual force, it still left behind it an imperishable memory that may well prove an incentive, in the matter of loyalty to Christ and devotion to His service, to the more highly favoured churches of to-day.

APPENDIX A

THE NAME

The name Nestorian is that by which the church whose headquarters were originally at the twin cities of Seleucia-Ctesiphon on the Tigris but are now at Qudshanis on the great Zab, a river in Kurdistan, is generally, but mistakenly, known. That by which it is officially designated and which the Nestorians themselves prefer is the 'Church of the East' or 'Easterns' to distinguish it from Jacobites, Greeks and Latins who are all classed as Westerns.[1] It was meant to apply to those who were beyond the boundaries of the Roman empire and especially to those who were subjects of the empire of Persia. The two empires were almost constantly at war and there was therefore very little coming and going between the 'Church of the East' and the church of the Roman Empire. This very reason saved the former from many of those doctrinal disputes, such as the Arian and Nestorian controversies, which disturbed the peace of the church of the west, but prevented that friendly intercourse which would have tended to remove misunderstandings ; especially those that were due to ignorance.

To settle the Arian dispute was one of the chief reasons for the *Council of Nicea*, and one of the ultimate results of the Nestorian controversy was to brand the 'Church of the East' with a name that carries with it the stigma of heresy and which arose out of a dispute with which they had nothing whatever to do and of which they were ignorant until long after it was over. The 'Church of the East' was in existence generations before the condemnation of Nestorius. That he was wrongly condemned has been clearly shown in two comparatively recent publications —one by Bethune Baker entitled Nestorianism, and the other by Professor Loofs under the title Nestorius—so that it is unnecessary to add anything further under that head. It may be of interest however, to mention briefly some of the reasons

1 Maclean, A. J., *The Catholicos of the East and his People*, p. 6 ff.

why the 'Church of the East' should have been so entirely separated from the churches of the West and why the churches of the West and especially the church of Rome call it by the name Nestorian and continue to speak of the Nestorians as heretics. One reason doubtless was the fact that the 'Church of the East' holding the same views that Nestorius held—not those he was charged with holding—refused to join in condemning him when the fact that he had been excommunicated was brought to its notice. The decrees of the *Council of Nicea* were not known to the 'Church of the East' until A.D. 410, eighty-five years after they were passed, but immediately they were brought to its notice it subscribed to them. That the doctrinal position of Nestorius was also in harmony with these same decrees is practically admitted in the treatises referred to. If he were excommunicated it followed that any church refusing to endorse his excommunication must be dealt with in the same way.

There were, however, other causes that contributed to the separation. Of these Adeney mentions four.

(1) GEOGRAPHICAL. The 'Church of the East' was separated by the Syrian desert from the major part of the church of the Roman empire. Communication between the two was therefore difficult though not impossible.

(2) POLITICAL. The 'Church of the East' was under the domination, first of the Parthian Empire and after A.D. 226 of the Persian Empire, and from the latter part of the fourth century A.D. it was a recognized 'melet' or subject race of Persia. Further the Persians and Romans were almost constantly at war with one another and although this did not necessarily affect the status or position of the 'Church of the East' when the Roman Emperors were still pagan it was altogether different after the conversion of Constantine. When the emperor of Rome professed himself a Christian and Christianity became recognized as the official religion of the state, the Persian kings were naturally inclined to suspect their Christian subjects as being in some sense allies of Rome, or at all events, sympathisers who might be likely to furnish information to the enemies of the country. That this suspicion was not altogether unfounded is evident from incidents that have been recorded by historians of undoubted reliability, e.g., the

catholicos or patriarch of Seleucia, Babowai, was discovered holding treasonable correspondence with the emperor Zeno in the year A.D. 484 and was hanged by his fingers till he died.[1] The expression 'God has delivered us up to an impious sovereign' had been used in one of his letters. The less intercourse there was on the one hand between the Christians in Persia and the Christians in Syria, the less likelihood would there be on the other hand of bringing the wrath of the Persian king down upon them, and thus interchange of views would naturally be discouraged.

(3) LINGUISTIC. The literary language of the Eastern portion of the Roman empire and around the Mediterranean was Greek, while the language of the church in Persia was Aramaic with its two main dialects--East Aramaic or Syriac, the dialect of Edessa, and west or Biblical Aramaic (Chaldee) the language of the Targums and other writings.

(4) DOCTRINAL. This was perhaps the great dividing factor. As early as the *Council of Chalcedon* in A.D. 451 Monophysitism had made considerable progress in both the African and eastern portions of the empire. In the reigns of the emperors Zeno A.D. 474–491, and Anastasius A.D. 491–518 it had practically become the religion of the state. Rome had been taken by the Goths, and Odoacer proclaimed king of Italy in the year A.D. 475, so that although the patriarchate of Rome continued orthodox as regards Monophysitism, Italy was already lost to the Empire. It was of the utmost importance, therefore that North Africa and Syria should not follow suit. As the Monophysites were in the ascendancy, not only in Alexandria but also in Antioch and Constantinople, during the reigns of the emperors mentioned, these would not run the risk of estranging those subjects who were left to them (i.e. the Monophysites of Syria and Egypt) in order to conciliate the Dyophysites of Italy who were already lost. The emperors were themselves Monophysites in sympathy, and consequently Monophysitism grew until it monopolized all the great patriarchates in the empire, with the exception of Rome which anathematized all the others. Monophysitism continued to be the predominant religion till the reigns of Justin I, A.D. 518 and Justinian A.D. 527 who took

1 Wigram, *History of the Assyrian Church*, p. 152.

steps to bring the churches of the empire back to the orthodox faith. Neither Justin I nor Justinian, however, persecuted the Monophysites, but according to Wigram 'they depressed them' and as far as possible secured that thay should not consecrate any bishops.[1] The result was that by the year A.D. 543, excluding Armenia which remained entirely Monophysite, there was scarcely one Monophysite bishop left in the east. Under Jacob Baradaeus, however, who was secretly ordained about this time, and from whom the Monophysites came to be called Jacobites, a great Monophysite revival took place. Those ordained by Jacobus penetrated into Persia and were a source of great trouble to the Nestorians there, a proceeding which was not likely to modify the opinion held by the Nestorians regarding the church of the Roman Empire. That Rome held views differing from those current in Antioch and Constantinople was scarcely likely to be understood by them. When information about the Nestorian controversy began to filter through to Persia, the religion of the empire of Rome as known to the 'Church of the East' was markedly Monophysite. It was, as it had always been, Diophysite. This rendered it less than ever inclined to intercourse with a church which it looked upon as heretical, and the difference between the Christians of Persia and those of Syria and Constantinople was easily emphasized. When later on they learned that Nestorius had been condemned as a heretic, and that all who held his views had been anathematized, the separation between the two churches was complete and the way paved for the continuance of their recognition by the reigning kings as a subject 'melet' of the Persian empire with its resulting rights and privileges.

The first Council of the 'Church of the East' met at Seleucia about the year A.D. 315 when as the result of a quarrel between Papa, the first catholicos, and some of the metropolitans, Papa was deposed. He appealed not to the patriarch of Antioch, but to S'ada bishop of Edessa. Tradition has it that the appeal went also to the famous James of Nisibis. In other words, it was referred to the nearest bishops of eminence. A compromise was arrived at and Papa resumed office. Neither

1 Wigram, *History of the Assyrian Church*, p. 18.

then nor at any other time did the 'Church of the East' regard Antioch as its mother or superior in any way. Another Council met at Seleucia in A.D. 410 when the decrees of the *Council of Nicea*, which had just been brought to the notice of the church, were formally and unanimously accepted or adopted. In A.D. 424 still another Council consisting of all six metropolitans then in office and 31 other bishops, met at the town of Markabta of the Arabs. At it the title of patriarch was applied to the catholicos (Dad Ishu) for the first time. It was also resolved that in future absolute obedience was to be rendered to the patriarch and above all, that no appeal was to be made from his decision to 'western patriarchs,' thus emphasizing the claim of the 'Church of the East' to be entirely independent.[1] The reasons given sufficiently account for the separation of the 'Church of the East' from the churches of the West but they do not explain why the 'Church of the East' should have been branded with a name of such opprobious signification. Abraham Yohanan holds that the name was first applied to the 'Church of the East' by the Roman Catholic church, probably centuries after the time of Nestorius, and that it was meant, as already stated, to carry with it the stigma of heresy.[2] That Yohanan is in error, at least as regards the date when the name was first given, is obvious from the fact that Cosmas speaks of the Christians whom he met in A.D. 525 as Nestorians. If as claimed the Nestorian church remained true to the creed of the church as approved by the *Council of Nicea* in A.D. 325 it may be asked why the church of Rome should so persistently describe it as heretical and continue to anathematise Nestorius and all those who held his views.

The explanation is to be found not so much in differences of doctrine as in the claim made by Rome to the primacy of all the churches. As regards the western patriarchates this claim was definitely disallowed both at Nicea and Chalcedon, and Seleucia in the east has all along claimed to be quite independent of either Antioch or Rome. At the *Council of Chalcedon* the decision to recognize Constantinople as of equal standing with Alexandria and Rome and Antioch was in-

1 Wigram, *History of the Assyrian Church*, p. 124.
2 Yohanan, *The Death of a Nation*, p. 4.

dignantly objected to by Rome, but by Rome alone. Even then, however, Monophysitism was beginning to make itself felt and under the reign of Zeno and still more so under Anastasius it made such progress that it captured all the western patriarchates, Rome excepted. When Justin succeeded to the throne in A.D. 518 practically the whole of the eastern portion of the empire was Monophysite in doctrine. When the sees of Antioch, Alexandria and Constantinople were again filled with patriarchs who held orthodox views, the claims of Rome, which had continued orthodox, at least as regards the particular point in dispute—the person of Christ—were not likely to be very seriously contested, and when the devastating scourge of the Saracens, followed later by the Seljuk and then the Ottoman Turks, swept the church of North Africa practically out of existence and nearly did the same with Antioch and Constantinople, there was no longer any one to contest Rome's claim to supremacy except the 'Church of the East,' the so called Nestorians. One can easily understand therefore the efforts made to get it also to acknowledge the headship[1] of Rome and the bitterness with which it continued to be spoken of as heretical when it refused to do so.

Note. About the year A.D. 1830 or a little later a Jesuit is said to have offered the Nestorian patriarch, £2,000 on condition that he would acknowledge allegiance to the Pope. The patriarch replied in the emphatic language of Peter to Simon Magus 'thy money perish with thee.' About the same date emissaries of Rome are alleged to have assured the patriarch that if he would so far become Roman Catholic as to recognize the supremacy of their master he would not only continue to be patriarch of the Nestorians but would have all the Christians of the east added to his jurisdiction.[1]

One of the newest measures' according to Perkins, was an order purporting to be fresh from the Pope to his agents in the region of Urumiah, to canonise Nestorius, whose name and memory every Roman Catholic for so many centuries had been required to curse. It is perhaps doubtful whether such an order was actually issued from Rome or merely fabricated by her agents in Urumiah. Its object and effect would in either case be the same.

1 Perkins, *Residence in Persia among the Nestorians*, p. 23.

APPENDIX B

THE BIBLE OF THE NESTORIANS AND THE SPREAD OF ALPHABETIC WRITING AND CULTURE

Two things were specially characteristic of the Nestorian Christians in the early centuries; the possession of the whole Bible, with the exception of the three smaller epistles of Peter, John and Jude, and of the Apocalypse, in their own tongue; and the fact that wherever they went they seem to have introduced the art of writing to those whom they were seeking to reach.

The art of printing had not then been discovered and copies of the Scriptures had to be laboriously made by hand. Notwithstanding this, they seem to have had a very wide circulation and the preachers, who went from place to place, appear always to have had the gospels or some other portion of scripture with them.

Their schools of the prophets devoted much of their time to the study of scriptures and the students were expected to know large portions by heart. The version in common use was that known as the 'Peshitto,' meaning the 'simple,' or clear text edition. What the authorized version is to English or Luther's to German, so is the 'Peshitto' version to Syriac.

It was probably completed before the end of the second century A.D., is quoted by Ephrem, one of the fathers of the 'Church of the East,' in the fourth century, and manuscript copies still existing date back to A.D. 464.[1] The 'Peshitto' is used by all Syrian Churches without exception, Nestorians, Jacobites, Maronites, Chaldeans, Melkites and the St. Thomas Christians of Malabar. Its character is masterly and it has the advantage of being in the vernacular of Bible countries, and which reaches back to Bible times.

The Peshitto Old Testament has evidently been translated directly from Hebrew. The place of origin is supposed to have

1 Appendix to Murdoch's Translation of *Syriac New Testament*, pp. 490-492.

been Edessa, which was the metropolis of the eastern world and the centre of a region where as we have seen Christianity was very early planted. There were other versions of the scriptures produced at later periods but none of them were of equal merit or met with the general acceptance that was accorded to the 'Peshitto.'

Prior, however, to the completion of the Old and New Testaments in the 'Peshitto' version the 'Church of the East' was not without copies of the gospels and other portions of the sacred writings. Eusebius in his ecclesiastical history speaks of the visit of Pantaenus to India in A.D. 190 and refers to the report that his arrival there had been anticipated by some who were acquainted with the gospel of Matthew in the Hebrew, and the book itself was still in existence when Dr. Buchanan visited Malabar in 1806.[1]

Dr. Buchanan had some discussion with a priest, or kattanar, there who maintained that the gospels were originally written in Syriac. 'What translations you have in the West' he said 'we know not, but the true Bible of Antioch we have had in the mountains of Malabar for 1,400 years or longer. Some of our copies are from ancient times, and so old and decayed that they can scarcely be preserved much longer.' 'That our Saviour spoke in Syriac is evident from such expressions as Ephphatha, Talitha kumi, and Eli Eli lama sabachthani.' 'If' said this kattanar 'the parables and discourses of our Lord were in Syriac and the people of Jerusalem commonly used it, is it not wonderful that his disciples did not record his words in Syriac and that they should have recourse to Greek?'

Dr. Buchanan acknowledged that it was believed by some that the gospel of Matthew was written originally in Syriac. But if Matthew why not John? the kattanars asked. Such was their attachment to the ancient Syriac Scriptures.

The 'Diatessaron' or Harmony of the gospels

Even earlier than the time of Pantaenus we have evidence of the existence of scripture versions in such books as Tatian's Diatessaron, or harmony of the gospels. Tatian himself, if not a gnostic, had gnostic tendencies and was supposed to have omitted from his Diatessaron anything that might appear to be

1 Hastings, Introduction to *Murdoch's Syriac New Testament*, p. 18.

contrary to his gnostic leanings. *The Diatessaron* must have been in existence not later than A.D. 172–173 and some claim the even earlier date of A.D. 136 for it.[1] Unless it was translated from the Greek, which seems unlikely, it presupposes the existence of the gospels in Syriac at that time.

About the year A.D. 200 a Bishop called Pabet brought with him a version of the complete New Testament in Syriac. The Diatessaron, however, continued to be read in the churches and used generally until the fifth century when its place was taken by the four separate gospels.

When Theodopetus Bishop of 'Cyrrhus' visited the Syrian church in Edessa in A.D. 280 he ordered all copies of 'Tatian's gospel,' as the 'Diatessaron' was called, to be destroyed as heretical.[2] The order was apparently only partially carried out as the book continued to be used for some time longer. Prior to its being entirely discontinued or destroyed Ephraem the Syrian had embodied the entire work paragraph by paragraph in a commentary which he wrote on it. This commentary was translated in the early centuries into Armenian. The entire work was lost sight of for a long period but in A.D. 1832 it was republished in Venice by a monk in the Armenian monastery there named Paschal Aucher.

Nothing further was heard of the book till A.D. 1877 when a German named Theodor Zahn, having secured a copy of the Venetian edition, extracted the paragraphs comprising the 'Diatessaron' from the Armenian version of Ephraem's commentary and published it by itself. It was found that Tatian in preparing his harmony 'had merely aimed at presenting a full and consecutive narrative of Christ's life by linking together into one whole all the important statements and facts recited by the four evangelists' their very words having been 'culled bodily' from the Syriac gospels. The fact that the gospels had been in existence in Syriac prior to the publication of the Diatessaron was thus indisputably settled.

Homilies on Virtues

In addition to the Scriptures, treatises by well-known exegetes and others were held in high esteem. The homilies of

1 Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity*, p. 67.
2 Seth M. J., *History of the Armenians in India*, pp. 183, 184.

Aphrates, a converted Persian noble, one of the best known of the ancient Syriac fathers, who wrote about the year A.D. 337–344 give a very suggestive insight into the character of these early Nestorian writers.[1]

The first homily is on faith. The foundation of our faith, says Aphraates, is Jesus Christ, the rock upon which the whole is built. A man, first believes, then loves, then hopes, then is justified and perfected and becomes a temple for the Messiah to dwell in. (Jeremiah vii. 4–5.) The man who has faith will study to make himself worthy of being a dwelling place for the spirit of Messiah.

Other things emphasized as being necessary are fasting, prayer, love, alms, humility, virginity, continence, wisdom, hospitality, simplicity, patience, gentleness, sadness and purity.

To Aphraates, Christianity was the revelation of a divine spirit dwelling in man and fighting against moral evil, and not philosophical speculation about the nature of divinity. In this he differs from much Greek and Latin Christianity. It was a matter of the heart rather than of the head, a question of moral allegiance rather than theological adhesion.

Aphraates teaches that the Holy Spirit is feminine. This is due to the fact that in Semitic languages there is no neuter and 'ruh,' the word for wind or spirit, is feminine. John xiv. 26, in Syriac reads, 'The Spirit, the paraclete, she shall teach you everything.'[2]

In another treatise Aphrates says, 'when a man hath not yet taken a wife, he loveth and honoureth God as Father and the Holy Spirit as mother and he hath no other love.' There is early Christian authority for this. In the ancient gospel according to the Hebrews, as quoted by Origen and also by Jerome, our Lord himself speaks of the Holy Spirit as His mother. Origen does not reject this saying but tries to explain it away.

Later than Aphraates come such names as Ephraim and Rabbula.[2] The latter died in A.D. 435.

Spread of Alphabetic Writing and Culture

The part played by the Nestorian church in the spread of

1 Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity*, p. 83.
2 Idem, p. 115.

alphabetic writing and the development of culture is also very striking. Wall holds that the first alphabet was Semitic or Hebrew and that it was given by special revelation to Moses. In support of this view he quotes Exodus xxxi. 18; xxxii. 16; xxxiv. 27, 28 and Deut. ix. 10. The Book of Job was, he thinks, to begin with, probably written in hieroglyphics and translated into alphabetic writing by Moses.[1]

Isaac Taylor on the other hand holds that Phoenician[2] was the mother of alphabets and that in Europe it was succeeded by Greek, and elsewhere by Aramean which became the parent of the great Semitic alphabets.[3]

Both are agreed, however, that the Aramean or Syriac was the channel through which alphabetic writing was carried to the nations of the far east, such as the Turks, Uigurs, Mongolians and Manchus, and that it reached these countries mainly through the efforts of Nestorian Christians.

Caldwell groups the languages of these different countries under the common name Scythian and says that to the same group belong the Dravidian languages of South India.[4] This would seem to indicate that the Nestorians of Malabar and South India may have had something to do with the introduction of alphabetic writing there. According to Taylor, Aramean (so called after Aram the highland, as distinguished from Canaan the low land) arose in the seventh century B.C. and was very widely diffused.[5]

Northern Aramean developed at Edessa in the first century, into what is known as Syriac. Southern Aramean became the Hebrew of the Hebrew Bible.

The form of the Syriac alphabet which prevailed during the flourishing period of Syrian culture is known as Estrangelo.[6]

1. Wall, *Ancient Orthography of the Jews*, Vol. I, pp. 333, 338.
2. Taylor, *The Alphabet*, Vol. I, p. 245.
3. In 1923 Professor Grimme of Westphalia succeeded in deciphering a number of inscriptions discovered by Sir William Petrie in 1904, at Serabit-el-Hadem on the peninsula of Sinai. These are found to be Semitic in character and furnish the oldest known Semitic alphabet, the date claimed for them being about 1500 B. C. As the oldest known forms of the Phoenician alphabet do not go beyond the thirteenth century B.C. the priority of the Semitic would thus seem to be confirmed.
4. Caldwell, *Dravidian Comparative Grammar*, pp. 45, 46.
5. Taylor, *The Alphabet*, Vol. I, p. 245.
6. Idem, p. 285.

The Peshitto version of the scriptures dating from the second century A.D. was written in Estrangelo which after the fifth century was superseded by a variety of cursive scripts resulting from various theological disputes. Some of these secondary Syriac alphabets, each having certain peculiarities in the formation of some of the letters to distinguish it from the others, are named after different heresiarchs, e.g. Nestorian, Jacobite, Maronite.

The Nestorian alphabet with its distinctive peculiarities was carried by Nestorian Missionaries to India where it is still used.[1] Nine additional letters were added to express sounds peculiar to the Dravidian languages.

Taylor adds that the Nestorians penetrated the Turkish hordes of Central Asia 'and even crossed the great wall of China.' That the Nestorians spread their culture among the Turkish tribes is however, confirmed from other sources. The Mongolian, Kalmuk and Manchu alphabets are found to resolve themselves into slightly disguised forms of the Estrangelo alphabet as it was at the time of what Taylor calls, the Nestorian schism.[2]

The Ural Altaic races of Central Asia have had three distinct alphabets. (1) The Syriac introduced by the Nestorian missionaries, 'the diffusion of which forms one of the most curious episodes in the whole history of the alphabet.' (2) An Indian alphabet which came to them through the Buddhists of Tibet. (3) The Arabic alphabet which came with the Muhammadan conquest. The discovery by Klaproth and Ramassan in the nineteenth century A.D. of the connection of the Tartar and Mongolian alphabets with Estrangelo, solved the question as to the nature and affinities of these languages.

Vambéry found that a Nestorian from Urumiah was able without assistance, to decipher parts of an ancient Tartar manuscript which had been written at Herat, so slight was the change that had taken place in the letters.

'The art of writing took strongest hold amongst those Tartar tribes which were most advanced in civilization. These were the Uigurs the 'ogres' of old romance.'[3] They were the

1. Taylor, *The Alphabet*, Vol. I, p. 293.
2. Idem, p. 294.
3. Idem, p. 300.

ruling race in what are now the Khanates of Khiva and Bokhara and were the earliest tribes to adopt Nestorian writing, and for a considerable time they were the only people to use it.

Rubruck says that Nestorians and Saracens were to be found in all the towns of the Uigurs. In the country of the Organum, the people had a language and an alphabet of their own in which the Nestorians conducted the services and wrote their letters.[1] The Uigurs were their best scribes and nearly all the Nestorians were educated.

In A.D. 1204, after the defeat of the 'Naiman' by Jenghiz Khan, the latter ordered his prime minister, who was a Uigur, to teach the language of his native land to his sons and to adapt the script to the Mongol language. John de Carpini says that the Uigurs adopted the Nestorian alphabet and that prior to that they had no script. According to Barthold, the Transoxanian and Uigur script was called barbaric script.[2]

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries A.D., Uigurs, almost exclusively, were employed as secretaries, chancellors and physicians by Jenghiz Khan and his three immediate successors.[3] In this way the Uigur alphabet became the usual medium of written intercourse throughout the whole vast region over which the Mongol empire extended, and the parent of alphabets made use of by other more backward tribes such as the Mongols, the Kalmuks and the Manchus.

Among the Uigurs themselves, Nestorian writing ultimately gave way to Arabic which is now used exclusively in the Khanates of Khiva, Bokhara, etc. The alphabets derived from the Nestorian missionaries are therefore now in use only among those of Mongol blood who are beyond the pale of Islam.

There is an Uigur manuscript, a copy of a Turkish poem of the eleventh century A.D., in Vicuna.[4] It is the oldest existing document in Turkish speech and supplies us with a specimen of the Nestorian alphabet as adapted to the use of the Ugro-Altaic tribes. It shows the connecting link between Nestorian writing and the various Mongolian alphabets.

1 Rockhill, *Rubruck's Journey to Tartary*, pp. 141, 147, 150.
2 Barthold-Stube, *Zur Geschichte des Christentums in Mittel Asien*, p. 12.
3 Taylor, *The Alphabet*, Vol. 1, p. 300.
4 Idem, p. 302.

During the reign of Kublai Khan, the Uigur alphabet was developed and adapted to the needs of Mongol speech by the addition of five letters from Tibetan. The enlarged alphabet was called Mongol Galik, from the Sanscrit word Ka-lekah, the name of the Indian alphabet. It was apparently used largely in China until Kublai Khan ordered a return to the ideographic or some other form on the plea that it was derogatory to any country to borrow an alphabet from another.

The Mongol alphabet was also adopted, at some time unknown, by the Manchus, a Tungustic tribe which overran China in the seventeenth century. The Manchu alphabet has developed a large number of additional symbols, and is used also by the Buriat Mongols to the north of lake Baikal.

When Nestorian writing was first introduced into Central Asia, the Syrians, according to grammarians, used to write from the top to the bottom of the page just as the Mongolians do, the writing being then turned round into the usual position to be read. The Estrangelo characters in the Hsi-an-fu inscription are written in vertical lines. This explains why in some Syriac codices we find Greek marginal notes at right angles to the lines of the text. The custom was probably a matter of mere convenience. It was discontinued by the Syrians in the thirteenth century A.D., but permanently retained by the Mongols.

The distinctive peculiarities of Nestorian writing were not developed until the ninth century A.D., so that the Mongolian alphabets must have been derived from the Estrangelo or some earlier type prior to Estrangelo. This would indicate the spread of Nestorianism among the Mongols as early as the seventh or eighth centuries A.D. There are traces of Arabic influence in the Uigur, if not also in the Mongol script, showing that different elements entered into its constitution.

Although the Arabic alphabet differs in outward form from other Semitic scripts, it is a member of the Aramean family. Syriac and Arabic are essentially identical although the approximation is disguised by the number, form and arrangement of the characters.

It is worthy of note, that while it took Nestorianism three centuries to carry Syriac from the Mediterranean to the Pacific, it took only eighty years for Arabic to spread from the Tigris to the Indus.

APPENDIX C

THE JACOBITES

The Jacobites were the representatives of Monophysitism and therefore at the antipodes of the Nestorians as regards divergence from the Greek Church. They were so called after *Jacob,* surnamed *Al Bardai,* either from Bardaa, a city in Armenia, or from a sort of felt cloth called by the Arabs 'Barda.' This he wore in a ragged condition, which made him look like a beggar.

Jacob was born at Tela or Constantine, a place 55 miles east of Edessa, about the close of the fifth century. He was ordained in A.D. 545 or 551 and died A.D. 578. Trained in a monastery, he was educated in Monophysite theology and Greek and Syriac literature. He practised the most extreme asceticism and his fame as a monk and miracle worker rapidly spread. Summoned to Constantinople by the empress Theodora, he went reluctantly, having no ambition for the honours she was prepared to give. Detesting luxury, etc., he retired to a monastery near the city, where he spent fifteen years of his life as a recluse.

Then came the enforcement of the Chalcedonian decrees by Justinian. Those who refused to accept them were removed from their posts and sent into exile. Over large areas where the Monophysite doctrine prevailed the people were deprived of their clergy and left with the choice, as Gibbon remarks, of either being 'famished or poisoned.'

To meet this state of things and counteract the action of the emperor in the enforcement of the decrees, Jacob was dragged out of his cell. He undertook long journeys and traversed Asia Minor, Syria and Mesopotamia as far as Persia. Wherever he went he ordained bishops and priests, exhorted the people to fidelity, and encouraged them amid persecutions and disappointments.

He was successful beyond expectation and is credited with having ordained 100,000 clergy, 89 bishops and two patriarchs

His arrest was ordered and rewards promised but all in vain. He seemed to be ubiquitous. Friends among the Arabs hid him whenever danger threatened.

He failed, however, as an administrator, and the Monophysite party later was split into factions which often came to blows.

Apart from south-west India, the Jacobites are now found mostly in Mesopotamia, especially at Mosul and Mardin, but are not at all numerous.

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Map showing some of the Principal Centres of Nestorian Missionary Activity

Metropolitan Seats Underlined

70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
90
100
110
120
130
MERKITES
NAIMANS
URIATS
L. Baikal
KERAITS
JELAIRS
Dolonnor
MONGOLS
Tchakhan-nor
Karakorum
TARTARS
Egrigaia
Khan-Baliq
Tenduc
(Pekin)
JAPAN
Urumtsi
Chingintalas
CATHAY
Kamul
Cacanfu
Chiagting-fu
Tangut
Kampichu
Sinju
Yangchau
Shanghai
Erginul
Segin
(Hsi-an-fu)
TIBET
Kinsay
Hangchau
MANZI
Yachi
Kan-fu
Canton
BURMA
PHILIPPINES
Pegu
(Ayoutha)
Bay of
Bengal
Sarnam
SIAM
Str. of Malacca

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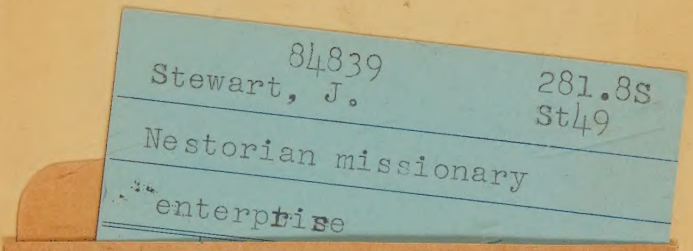
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Nestorian missionary
enterprise

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